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Sincerely Yours

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MATT WAS RIGHT!

I just re-read Matt Brock's "Plain Speaking" from the October 1993 *INSIDE WRESTLING*. There he touched on the lack of talent at WCW's Clash of the Champions XXIII. His final words were: "Things change in a hurry in wrestling. By next year, all the praise might be for WCW."

He couldn't have been more correct. WCW now has Flair, Hogan, Vader, Sting, Steamboat, Austin, possibly Hennig, and many more. In comparison, the WWF's only real main-eventers

are Bret Hart, Lex Luger, and Shawn Michaels.

What everyone must remember is that in a year's time, the balance of power could again shift. If the WWF were to sign Rick Rude, Sid Vicious, a major WCW star like Vader, or bring back the Steiners, the WWF could again be the dominant federation in North America.

ALLISTER STEVENS
Guildford, England

VON ERICH LEGACY

Even though I am a fan of the Von Erichs, I have to agree with many of the points made by Eddie Ellner in "The Insider" (November 1994). However, I feel he missed the key to understanding what happened to these star-crossed brothers.

David Von Erich was the star of that family. He was the most like father Fritz and clearly his favorite. Who knows how successful his career might have been or how many world titles he would have won had he not died? I think David's death in Japan triggered subsequent events.

First and foremost, it caused Mike Von Erich to be brought onto the scene much too early. He wasn't ready, physically or emotionally. Fritz took his time with his older sons. He hurried Mike in an attempt to replace David, an impossible task.

Next ... Would Kerry have become NWA World champion at age 24 if David had lived? No way. David would have fought Ric Flair for the belt at Texas Stadium. Too much fame for Kerry too soon? Definitely. Could that have led to the drug and alcohol abuse? Who knows?

And finally, the sad tale of Chris Von Erich. Along with his family, those of you in the media must



Though most fans might remember the Von Erichs (from left: Mike, Kerry, and Kevin) as a family destroyed by a series of tragedies, reader Anthony Richards will remember them as his favorites when he first began following wrestling.

take some blame for his fate. Do you remember all those stories about the Von Erich dynasty and the boy who will take them into the 21st century? I do. From the time he was 12, you guys had that kid believing he would be world champ. And furthermore, was it his fault that World Class was in disarray when his time came?

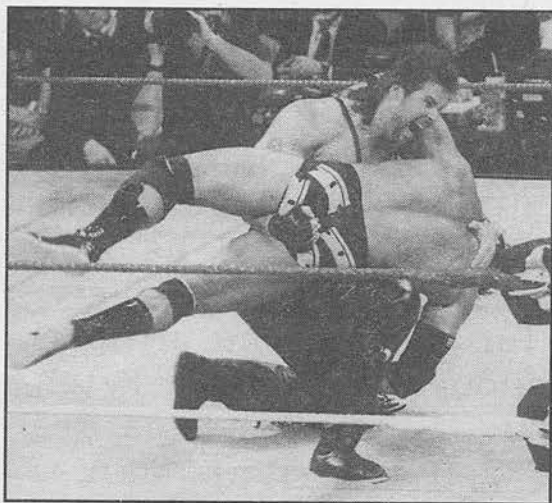
No matter. As Michael Hayes recently said in *The Wrestler*, "Those boys are gone and they're never coming back."

But remember, the Von Erichs cut out their place in wrestling history by introducing thousands of new fans like me, then a teenager, to pro wrestling.

ANTHONY RICHARDS
Buffalo, NY

DIESEL FUEL

Everyone has been suggesting that it hurts the WWF's image when a mid-card contender in WCW comes in and has a lot of success. That kind of reasoning has no logic at all. The Ultimate Warrior was no superstar before he joined the WWF and beat Hulk Hogan for the WWF World title. No one said Warrior embarrassed the WWF.



Diesel has a lot more to accomplish before he can call himself a great wrestler, argues reader Bob Morena. He says he succeeded in the WWF because he arrived in the federation at a time when the talent roster was weak.

Diesel is not a great wrestler yet. He's already got such a huge ego and that's not a good sign. I think he just came to the WWF at the right time, when there were few other superstars wrestling in the federation. He looked great in the Royal Rumble, but he only eliminated a bunch of mediocre wrestlers and wasn't able to last until the end, as Lex Luger and Bret Hart did. He's a good brawler, but if he wants to be continue his winning ways, he'll have to improve his skills.

I can't see Diesel and Shawn Michaels taking over as the dominant team in wrestling, like The Nasty Boys and Road Warriors did years ago. Michaels has a history of abandoning his friends and tag team partners. Remember Marty Jannetty and Sherri Martel. When things go wrong, Michaels will never blame himself. He'll do the same with Diesel.

BOB MORENA
Paoli, PA

A FLAIR FOR WHAT?

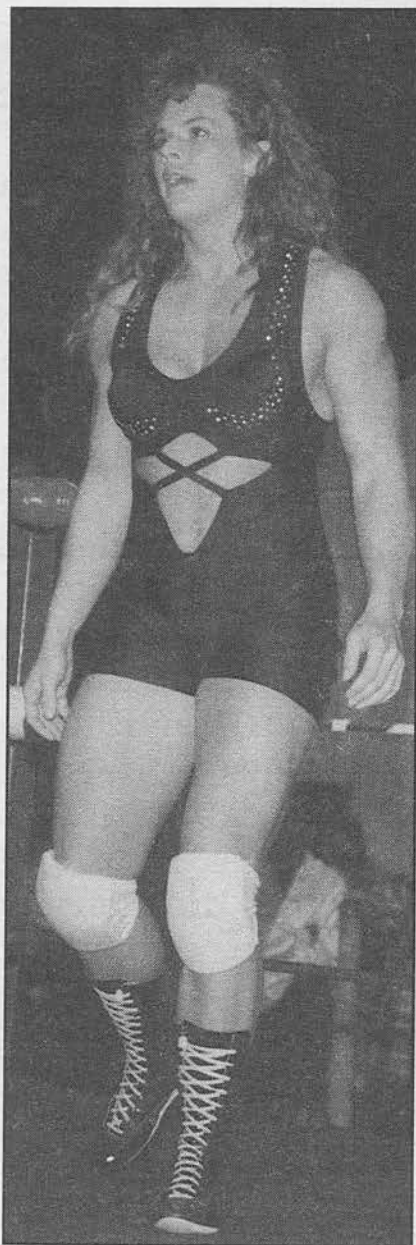
It boggles my mind that everyone thinks Ric Flair is a great wrestler. Watch his matches closely and you'll see what I mean. His entire arsenal consists of backhand chops, a figure-four leglock, and dirty tricks.

There so many guys with more ability than Flair it's almost embarrassing, and Bret Hart tops the list. Hart whipped Flair for the WWF World title in 1992, and dominated their series of rematches. I pray they wrestle one more time so he can finally whip Flair into retirement.

T. GIBSON
New York

NEW FIRES FOR BLAYZE

I think the WWF is crazy for not bringing in other great female wrestlers to challenge for Alundra Blayze's title. She easily disposed



WWF World Women's champion Alundra Blayze needs more quality challengers, says reader Morgan Gibson. Gibson suggests Terri Power as a possible future opponent.

of Luna Vachon, and although she had some trouble with Bull Nakano, she beat her at SummerSlam.

(Continued on page 56)

REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

By Stu Saks

Some random rumblings from the Ramblin' Ambler publisher:

Bob Backlund could scream and yell all he wants about how Arnold Skaaland cost him the WWF title by throwing in the towel a decade ago, but if his back injury wasn't so bad that he needed to have the match against The Iron Sheik stopped, why did he yield to Hulk Hogan instead of taking the offered rematch a month later? ... If the WCW broadcast booth became a numbers game, Jesse Ventura was the wrong man to cut ... My back goes up every time I see the label underachiever attached to any athlete. It takes some more time to develop than others (e.g. Sandy Koufax, Dick Tiger, Razor Ramon) and it just puts undue pressure on a man to force him to live up to our expectations ... Nick Bockwinkel is trying so hard to act quickly and decisively that his rulings are hasty, unfair, and damaging to WCW ... Early tabulations on the *PWI* Wrestler of the Year balloting give Bret Hart a slight lead over Hulk Hogan ... King Kong Bundy did very well financially with his computer commercials and acting cameos, but he lost some of the prime years of his career and it shows in the ring ... I enjoy watching Johnny B. Badd in much the same way I enjoyed watch Karl Gotch; he seems to have the ability to improvise and develop new moves during the course of a match ... If everybody keeps reminding Brian Pillman and Steve Austin how great they could have been as a team, they'll have to reunite, if for no other reason than to find out if everybody's right ... Congrats to WCW for adding the cruiserweight division. It took them long enough! ... Tammy Fytch is cute ... Hacksaw Duggan is lucky ... The Gangstas are repulsive ... Jeff Jarrett is clueless ... Honky Tonk Man is deluded ... Big Van Vader is raring ... Owen Hart is annoying ... Sabu is soaring ... Lord Steven Regal is boring.

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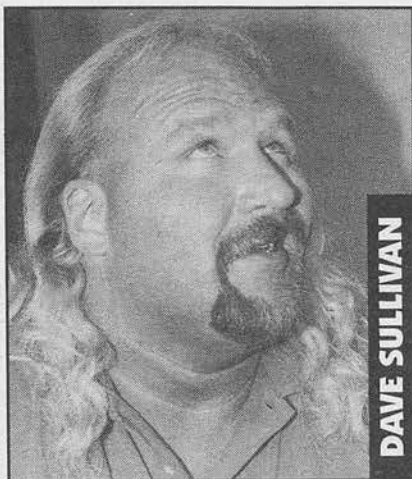
NAMES MA

CAN YOU BELIEVE that **Hacksaw Duggan** is WCW U.S. champ? The former WWF star took advantage of some very bizarre circumstances at Fall Brawl and pinned **Steve Austin** to win the prestigious belt.

WCW Commissioner **Nick Bockwinkel** had awarded the belt to Austin after **Rick Steamboat** announced he had a back injury and couldn't defend it. Austin didn't want to put the belt on the line, but Bockwinkel wanted the fans to see a title match and designated Duggan as the challenger. Austin refused to accept the challenge, but Bockwinkel literally shoved him into the ring. Duggan stunned the new champ, jumping him from behind and scoring the pin in 27 seconds.

Marcus Alexander Bagwell and **The Patriot** lost to WCW World tag team champions **Paul Orndorff** and **Paul Roma** at Fall Brawl, but the two Pauls couldn't gloat for long. Patriot and Bagwell beat them a week later in Atlanta.

World champ **Hulk Hogan** is continuing his feud with **Ric Flair**, but he knows **Big Van Vader** is waiting in the wings. Vader beat **The Guardian**



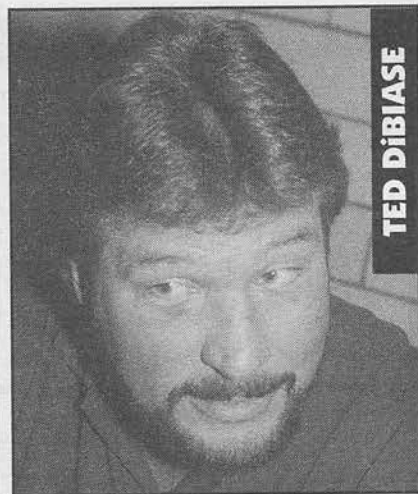
DAVE SULLIVAN

Angel and **Sting** in a "triangular" match at Fall Brawl to become the number-one contender to the belt, though Hogan was still scheduled to face Flair inside a steel cage at Halloween Havoc. Hogan has been talking about teaming with **Dave Sullivan** in matches against Flair and a partner of his choosing. Sullivan angered Flair by sticking up for the "Hulkster" in interviews.

Watch for some interesting battles between **Johnny B. Badd** and **The Honky Tonk Man** now that Badd is TV champ. Talk about two colorful personalities! ... Wasn't **Dusty Rhodes** impressive in War Games at Fall Brawl? He made quick work of **Col. Rob Parker**, forcing him to submit to a figure-four leglock. It looks like Dusty is headed back into retirement, but his son **Dustin** is continuing his feud with **Arn Anderson**. The other members of Parker's Stud Stable, **Bunkhouse Buck** and **Terry Funk**, are having their own wars with **The Nasty Boys**. Even though **Jerry Sags** and **Brian Knobs** are now fan favorites, they still want title matches against Bagwell and Patriot. The Nastys did beat them on WCW's

recent European tour, a few weeks before Bagwell and Patriot became champs.

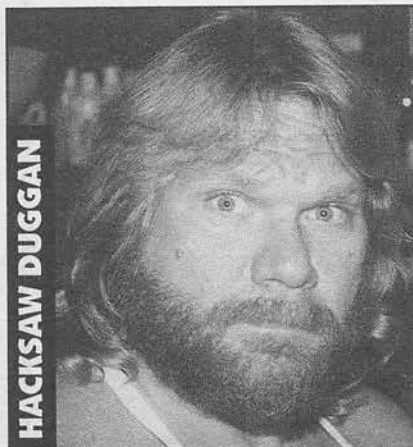
These are strange days in the WWF. Not only is **Bob Backlund** continuing to wrestle as a rulebreaker, but **Tatanka**, a new member of **Ted DiBiase's** corporation, is now dressing in style, thanks to the "Million-Dollar Man." He often comes out for interviews dressed in expensive suits. He's intent on ruining **Lex Luger** ... **Bret Hart** proved he is a better wrestler than his brother **Owen** this summer; now he is taking on brother-in-law **Jim Neidhart** in a series of matches, but he has an ally in **Davey Boy Smith**. Bret and



TED DIBIASE

Davey Boy beat Owen and Neidhart several times in Europe, as did Bret and **Randy Savage** ... The "Hitman" will face a colossal challenge starting in November. **King Kong Bundy**, another DiBiase corporation member, is negotiating for title bouts. As for Owen, he's taking aim at **Razor Ramon's** Intercontinental title.

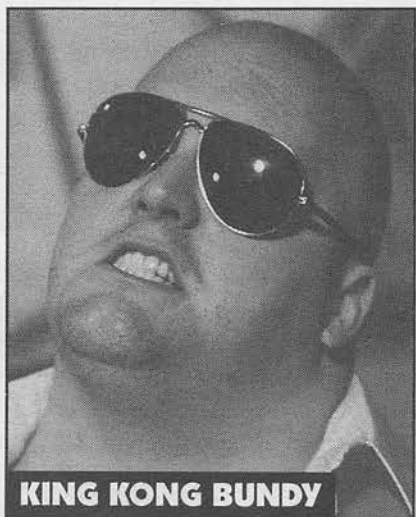
Now that **The Undertaker** has disposed of his evil namesake, he is back on the trail of **Yokozuna**. He



HACKSAW DUGGAN

KIN' NEWS

By Bill Apter



KING KONG BUNDY

has defeated the Samoan in several casket matches ... **Samu**, one-half of the former WWF World tag team champion **Headshrinkers**, is out with an injury he suffered at the hands of **Diesel** and **Shawn Michaels**. He's been replaced by **The Barbarian**, who has become an honorary Headshrinker.

Sparky Plugg is climbing the ladder of contention in the WWF, though he's not exactly Sparky Plugg anymore. He's using the name **Bob "Spark Plugg" Holly**. Perhaps he'll be facing **Abe "Knuckleball" Schwartz**, a cocky newcomer to the WWF who uses a suplex from the second rope as a finishing move.

Tony Anthony is continuing his dominance of Smoky Mountain, having turned back a threat from **Bruiser Bedlam**. Anthony is even teaming with former rival **Brian Lee** against the hated **Gangstas** in several matches. The Gangstas are also aiming at SMW tag team champions **The Rock 'n' Roll Express**, but haven't won the belts ... **Bryant Anderson**, **Ole's** son, is set to debut in SMW.

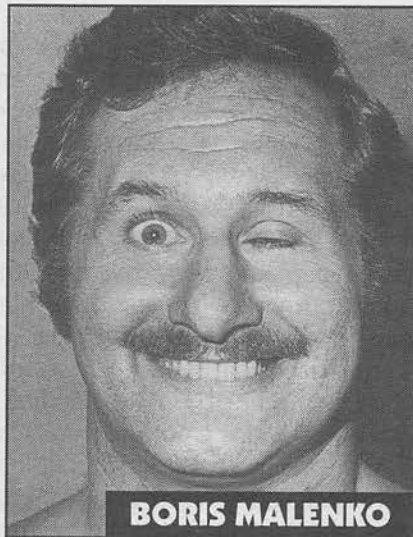
These aren't the best of days for **Jerry Lawler**. He was so tired of dealing with the pranks of **Doink** and **Dink** in the WWF that he enlisted the help of **Little Louie**, who is now known as **Queasy**. USWA officials told "The King" he will receive no more shots at **Sid Vicious'** heavy-weight belt ... The news is worse for **Doug Gilbert**. In the space of a month, he was stripped of the Southern title and had his head shaved after a loss to **Brian Christopher**.

Cactus Jack dropped a loser-leaves-WCW match to **Kevin Sullivan**, but he is in ECW, where he and **Mikey Whipwreck** won the ECW tag title from **Public Enemy**. After losing the TV belt to **Jason**, poor Mikey, whose offensive repertoire is limited, promised his mother he'd play it safe and never win another title ... **The Bruise Brothers** and **Bad Breed** are also after the ECW tag belts.

The **Tommy Dreamer-Sandman** feud continues to get more violent. Dreamer had to take 10 lashes with a Singapore cane after a recent loss. **Woman**, Sandman's cohort, said he

could avoid the beating if he kissed her feet, but he chose the pain ... **Ron Simmons** returned to wrestling after a brief hiatus, losing to **Sabu** on several ECW cards in Florida in September.

Ivan Koloff has announced his retirement after a 32-year pro career ... **Jushin Liger** vacated the IWGP junior heavyweight title after breaking an ankle during a match in Nagoya, Japan. He was expected to miss at least two months ... **Rick** and **Scott**

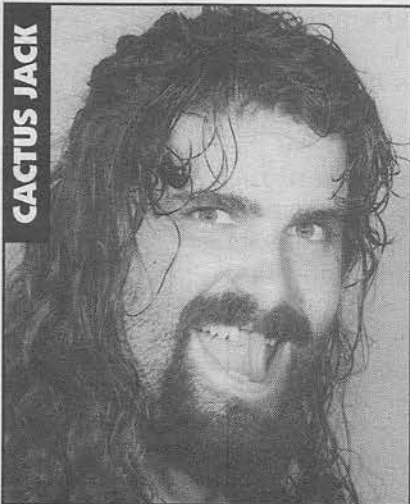


BORIS MALENKO

Steiner are competing occasionally in New Japan Wrestling.

Abdullah the Butcher suffered second- and third-degree burns on his chest after **Abbudah Singh** breathed fire on him during a bout in New Jersey. Amazingly, Abdullah still won the match.

Finally, some sad news. **Boris Malenko**, one of wrestling's most vicious rulebreakers during his heyday, died on September 1 after a four-month struggle with cancer. In addition to winning numerous titles, Malenko ran the Malenko Wrestling School in Tampa with sons **Joe** and **Dean**. Boris was 61. □



CACTUS JACK

THE SPORTS HERO no longer exists.

That is my only explanation for what transpired recently on *WWF Monday Night Raw*, when Bob Backlund decided that playing by his own high standards was no longer good enough for him. Backlund used to be on my list of heroes, along with O.J. Simpson and Tom Seaver and Maurice Cheeks and my father. It seems every time I turn on *SportsCenter*, that list becomes becomes one person shorter, and Backlund is the latest to be crossed off the list.

For those of you like myself who saw what happened but were too flabbergasted to believe it, Backlund exhibited his "chicken wing" against a helpless WWF employee named Lou Gianfriddo who volunteered to try to escape the hold. It stayed that way until federation officials, Randy Savage, and Vince McMahon himself were able to break it up.

It was one of the most bizarre personality transplants in wrestling history. Backlund had been a fan favorite for his entire illustrious career, which included a remarkable run as WWF World champion from 1978 to 1983. His performance since making a comeback two years ago has been spotty at best, but he was still "The All-American Boy."

It takes a lot to earn that nickname, and Backlund certainly looked and acted the part. His red hair and freckles and boyish grin gave him a Sawyeresque quality that you couldn't help but like. You could say Dennis Rodman has a boyish grin. Sometimes he even has red hair. But he also has an earring, several tattoos, and is a borderline psychotic.

But what made Backlund a hero was his adherence to his principles. He had no flair or panache. His style was white bread middle America, which is what you would expect from a kid from Princeton, Minnesota. He won an NCAA Division II 190-pound wrestling title at North Dakota State University in 1971.

The Upper Midwest once also was home to Lou Holtz, the bastion of propriety who is head football coach at Notre Dame. Holtz was formerly at the University of Minnesota, but didn't reward the Gophers with a title. In fact, he abandoned them for South Bend before the Minnesota program was placed on NCAA probation for infractions that occurred during his regime.

Backlund was viewed as an oddity in the WWF, where strange was quickly becoming normal. He had no costume, no gimmicks, no foreign objects. He simply wore tights and boots in no-nonsense burundy. We can only imagine Chris Webber and the rest of the new breed of young NBA player without

ON THE ROAD

With Chris Bernucca

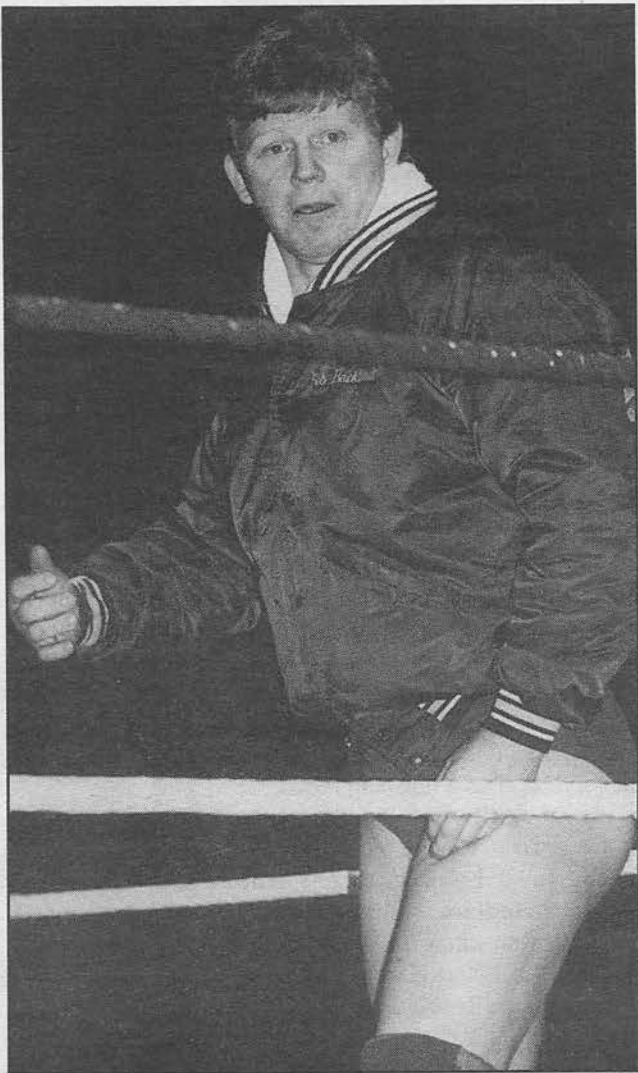
today's popular look of baggy trunks and short socks hidden by high-top sneakers, but we can also only imagine them keeping track of timeouts.

Backlund's enthusiasm for competition was so real it appeared phony. He ran to the ring much the same way Pete Rose—another fallen hero—used to run to first base after drawing a walk. Former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson used to enter the boxing ring to "Welcome To The Terrordome" by the socio-political rap group Public Enemy. Tyson is now in an Indiana

jail on a rape conviction, experiencing his own personal terrordome.

Backlund even went so far as to shake (or at least attempt to shake) his opponent's hand before each of

(Continued on page 61)



This was the Bob Backlund fans knew and loved, the premier technical wrestler who refused to rely on rulebreaking or outlandish braggadocio. Sadly, he has been replaced by an obnoxious egotist.

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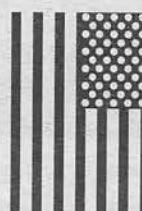
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Behind the Dressing Room Door

by David Rosenbaum

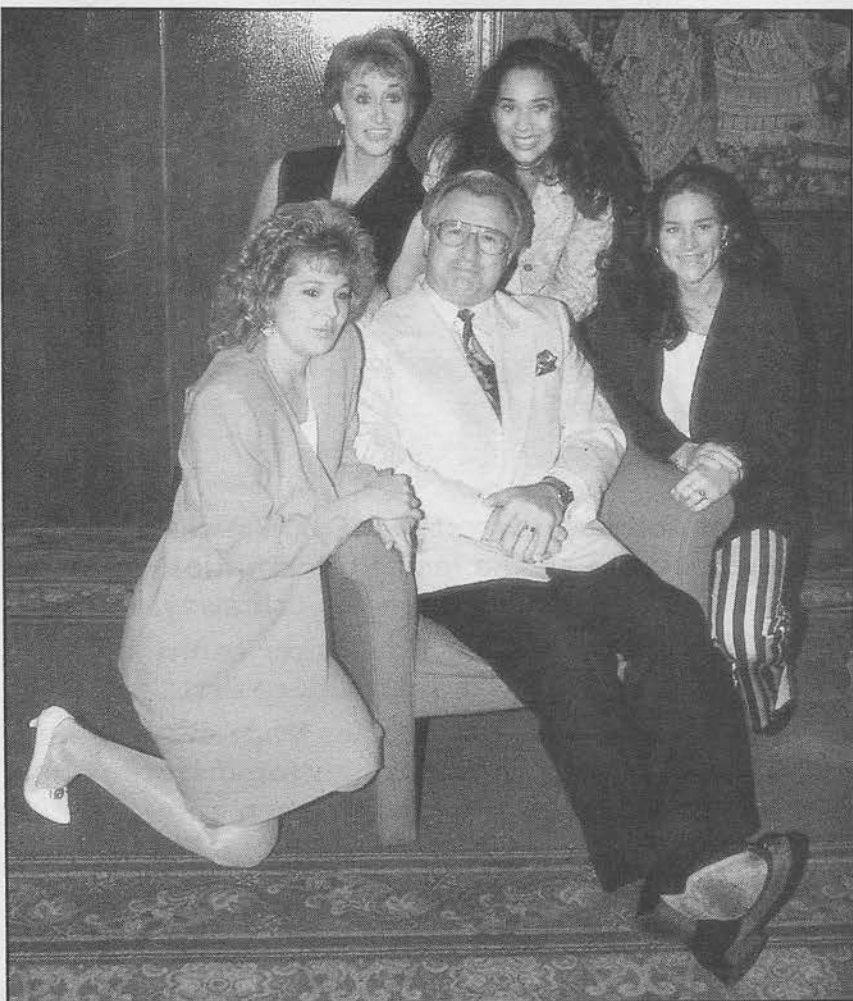
BEHIND THE DRESSING room doors of World Championship Wrestling, wrestlers are still talking about Commissioner Nick Bockwinkel and his recent decisions regarding Ric Flair, Rick Steamboat, Steve Austin, and Hacksaw Duggan. You can read all about it on page 50 of this issue. To sum it up:

Wrestlers are fast losing respect for their commissioner and wondering who actually runs the federation: Bockwinkel or Hulk Hogan.

But a better question might be: Who really runs the federation, Bockwinkel or Ted Turner? Unless you've closed your eyes to the rest of the sports world, you have probably noticed that there have been several labor disputes recently, and another one could be on the way in the NBA. One of the more interesting aspects of these disputes is the role of the commissioner.

In Major League Baseball, for example, the former commissioner was fired; his replacement—the acting commissioner—is Bud Selig, the owner of the Milwaukee Brewers.

In the National Hockey League,



Is Nick Bockwinkel capable of making impartial decisions as commissioner of WCW? Dave Rosenbaum wonders whether he is more concerned with pleasing Hulk Hogan, the federation's top drawing card.

a commissioner who was perceived by many as weak was dismissed and a management-friendly commissioner, Gary Bettman, was hired. Bettman took a strong role in the NHL labor dispute by actually being the owners' representative. In baseball, the owners were represented by negotiator Richard Ravitch.

More than 70 years ago, commissioner Kenisaw "Mountain" Landis made history by banning eight Chicago White Sox from baseball for allegedly fixing the 1919 World Series. In that instance, Landis was playing the typical commissioner's role of mediating disputes and handing down appropriate punishment.

But in the NHL, Bettman has played the role of arbitrator in team-player disputes and the role of management representative in negotiations for a new collective-bargaining agreement.

In wrestling, the commissioner or president of a federation has historically been the one to settle disputes between wrestlers and hand down fines and suspensions. He is actually a policeman. That's what Bockwinkel and Jack Tunney have been in WCW and the WWF, respectively. Stanley Blackburn played a similar role in the AWA.

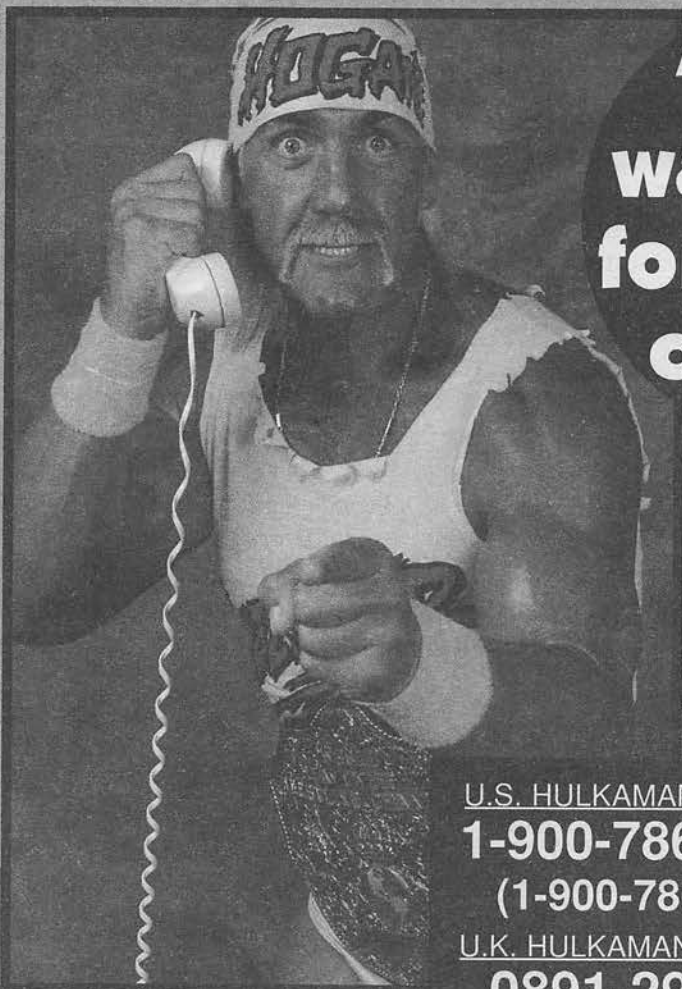
Bob Armstrong fought for his position in Smoky Mountain (and

(Continued on page 58)

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**DON'T BE
LEFT OUT!**

the Insider

by Eddie Ellner

(The opinions expressed in "The Insider" are those of Eddie Ellner alone, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of anyone else on the staff of this magazine.)

AT PRESS TIME, the contract clearly stated that the loser of the Hulk Hogan-Ric Flair match at Halloween Havoc would have to retire. Contract or no contract, I don't think retirement is in Ric Flair's immediate future, and I called him to tell him so.

Flair offered a relaxed chuckle at my theory and invited me over for lunch. I'm in the study of Flair's country home, an elegant fortress of cedar wood and stone. Sunk into a black leather recliner, Flair

speaks with the relaxed calm and authority of a CEO. He is thumbing through a photo album and stops at a picture of him and Buddy Rogers, early in Flair's career. "After I won my second U.S. belt, Rogers said he thought I might be the greatest champion of all time," Flair said. "The man was my idol, and there he was telling me I was gonna be the best. That stuck with me. Right then I decided to wrestle with an eye toward the future."

In the beginning there was Ric Flair, a man of ordinary size in a sport of behemoths, whose straw-colored hair demanded you pay him attention. Flair that never once doubted his talents. "You don't comprehend what you just

witnessed," he said after his first victory in 1973. "Memorize this face. It is the face of impossible elegance. It is champagne. It is victory."

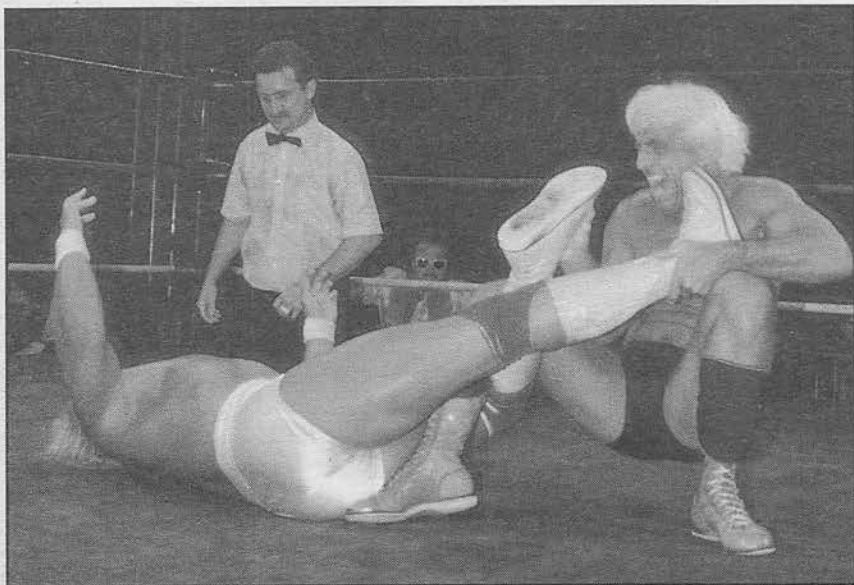
Perhaps that was the problem. Flair always had to remind us to appreciate him. Ten times he climbed the world championship mountain, more than any wrestler in the sport's long history, and still the wrestling world was ready to forsake him in favor of some upstart challenger named Sting or Luger, Vader, or Hogan.

"The problem," Flair said, "is that I think talent—and maybe a little bit of good looks—is enough to get you by in this world. My only gimmick is winning. People get bored by it."

Joe Namath understood the magnitude of his upset in Super Bowl III, after he led his Jets over the Baltimore Colts. So did Muhammad Ali after he knocked out George Foreman in "The Rumble In The Jungle." But Flair bristled when writers compared his December '93 victory over Van Vader for the WCW title to the upsets engineered by Namath and Ali. "I don't understand the thinking," he said, genuinely upset. "What do you think I've been doing all these years? Using mirrors and magician hats?"

Flair's victory should have crowned his glorious career. Instead, it foretold a nightmare—in Flair's case a recurring nightmare—named Hulk Hogan. "I used to think history would bear witness to the magnitude of my accomplishments. Ten world titles, in two federations. It doesn't matter. I see that I can't trust history. The people who write history are the same idiots who've covered me my entire career. I'm going to

(Continued on page 60)



You people will know the result of the Hogan-Flair Halloween Havoc steel cage match before this magazine goes to press. But I know something you don't: Win or lose, Ric Flair is not going to retire.

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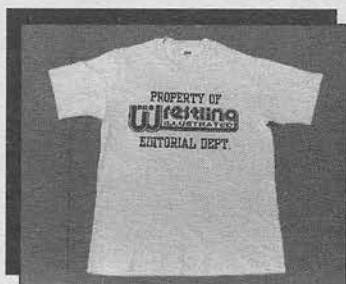


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What manager brought Hulk Hogan to the WWF in 1979?

- 1) Capt. Lou Albano
- 2) The Grand Wizard
- 3) Fred Blassie
- 4) Arnold Skaaland

Which of the following wrestlers did Lex Luger *not* defeat to capture one of his four U.S. heavyweight titles?

- 1) Nikita Koloff
- 2) Dusty Rhodes
- 3) Michael Hayes
- 4) Stan Hansen

True or False: Dusty Rhodes was once managed by rulebreaking manager Gary Hart.

- 1) True
- 2) False

How did Ric Flair severely injure his back in October 1975?

- 1) Airplane crash
- 2) Ring injury
- 3) Automobile accident
- 4) None of the above

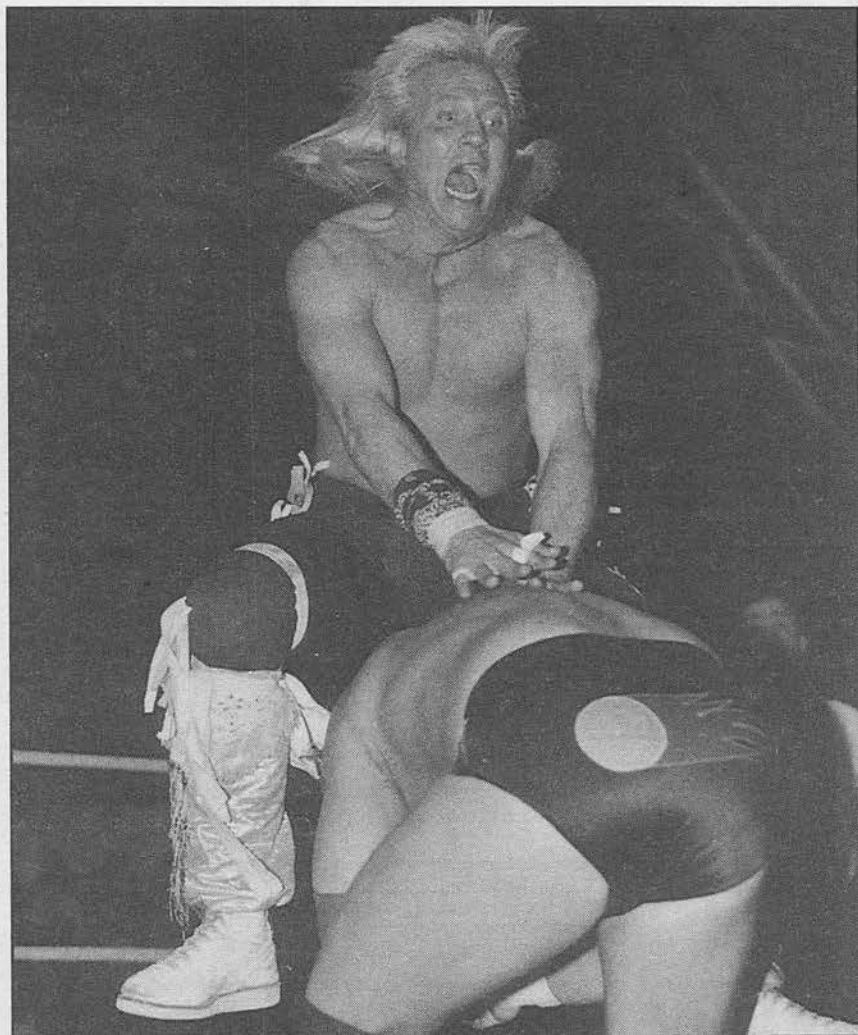
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ON Assignment

By Liz Hunter



Morton and Gibson still have plenty of spring in their legs, even after more than 15 years of competition. While content to be wrestling in SMW, both admit that they'd be willing to go after another world tag team title.

FISHERVILLE, VA: Another plum assignment. I arrived a day early for tonight's card at the Augusta Expo and was going crazy trying to kill time here in Fisherville, a city no one would confuse with New York. Then, a fortunate coincidence: During dinner, who should I run into but Rick Morton and Robert Gibson. One of the reasons I came here was to file a progress report on the ever-

popular Rock 'n' Roll Express. We had scheduled an interview following their match the following night, but this could turn into something significantly better.

It's always different when you accidentally meet wrestlers. During planned interviews, everyone has their shields up. Wrestlers often treat reporters as opponents. They rarely relax. The best stories I've written have been from

impromptu encounters like this.

"Hey, Liz, c'mere and join us," Robert Gibson offered. They seemed glad to see me. "We're here a day early, too," he said.

"It's not like it used to be," Morton added. "In the big federations, they used to schedule matches for us. I don't think I miss those days, but I sure do tonight."

I could feel this was going to be good. I leaned over and flicked on my tape recorder, hoping the dinner "interview" would be better than the mottled gray Salisbury steak decorating my plate.

Hunter: I remember the food being better in NWA towns.

Morton: It didn't move so much on the plate.

Hunter: Mine looks like it died.

Gibson: Me and Rick were just talking about the old days.

Hunter: You must do that a lot. You guys are still at the top, but it's not the same, is it?

Gibson: It is and it isn't, y'know?

Morton: A match is a match. We get just as excited for a match now as we did when we were headlining The Omni.

Hunter: Are you serious? I mean, I know if I'm writing a cover story, I regard it differently than if it's a small match report. It seems like it would be human nature.

(At that point, Gibson and Morton exchanged glances. I didn't want this to appear like an interview. We were having a conversation and I wanted to keep the lines loose and open.)

Hunter: Can you believe the movie theater in town?

Gibson: (laughing) I know. *Grease*. It's only 15 years old.

(Continued on page 62)

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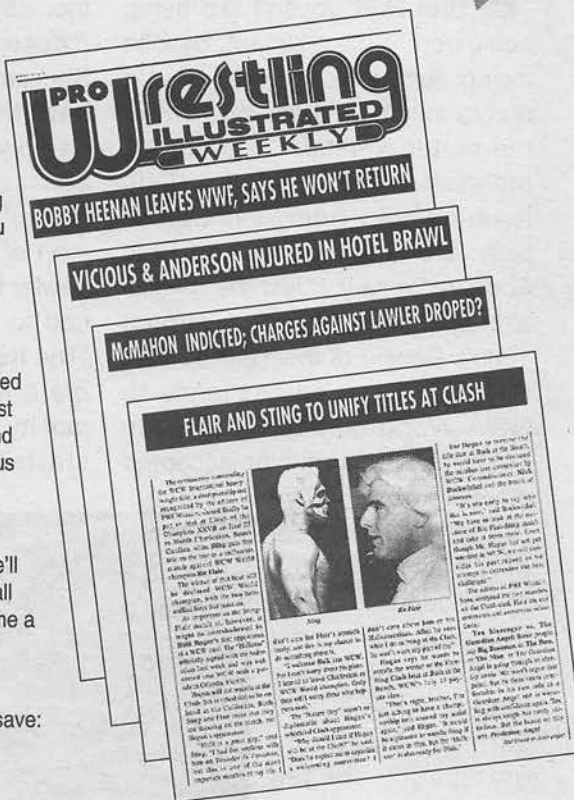
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INSIDE WRESTLING CAPSULE PROFILE ²²³

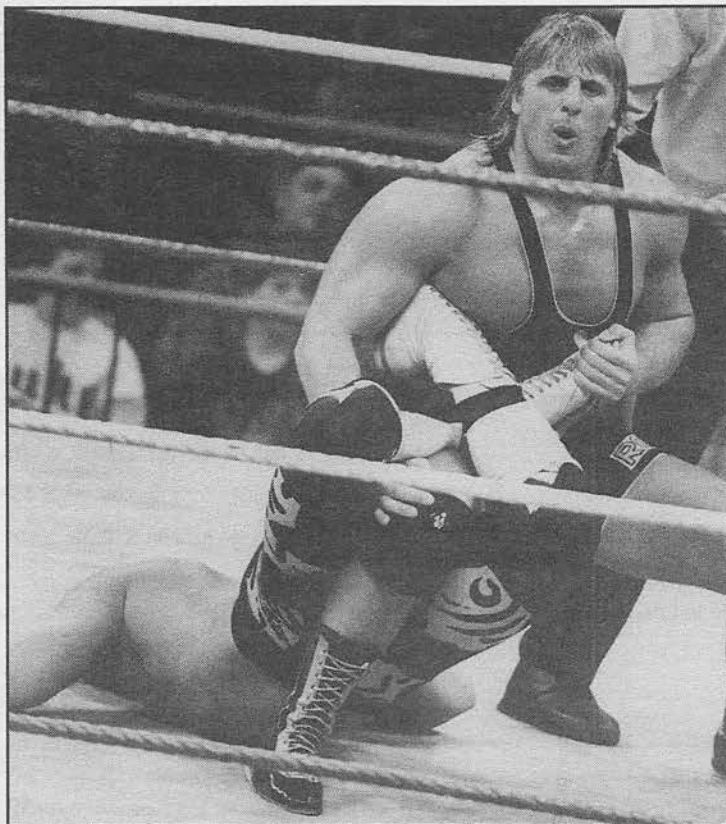
OWEN HART

THE YOUNGER BROTHER of WWF World champion Bret Hart doesn't like being compared to the "Hitman"; despite losing numerous times to Bret in recent months, he still thinks he's the better wrestler ... Made his professional debut in May 1986, teaming with Ben Bassarab to beat The Great Gama and Chic Scott in Calgary (*"Just the start of a magnificent career"*) ... Voted 1986's Rookie of the Year by PWI readers ... Issued challenge to NWA World champ Ric Flair in 1987, but it was never accepted (*"He knew 'The Rocket' would've beat him"*) ... Made his WWF debut in 1988, where he easily beat several preliminary foes ... After a brief stint in Japan, he grudgingly began competing as the masked Blue Blazer in the WWF (*"It was wrong to put a mask on a superstar!"*) ... Competed in the WWF, Mexico, Europe, and Canada over the next few years ... Began teaming with Jim Neidhart as The New Foundation in 1991 ... They beat The Orient Express and The Beverly Brothers, but never got a shot at the WWF World tag team

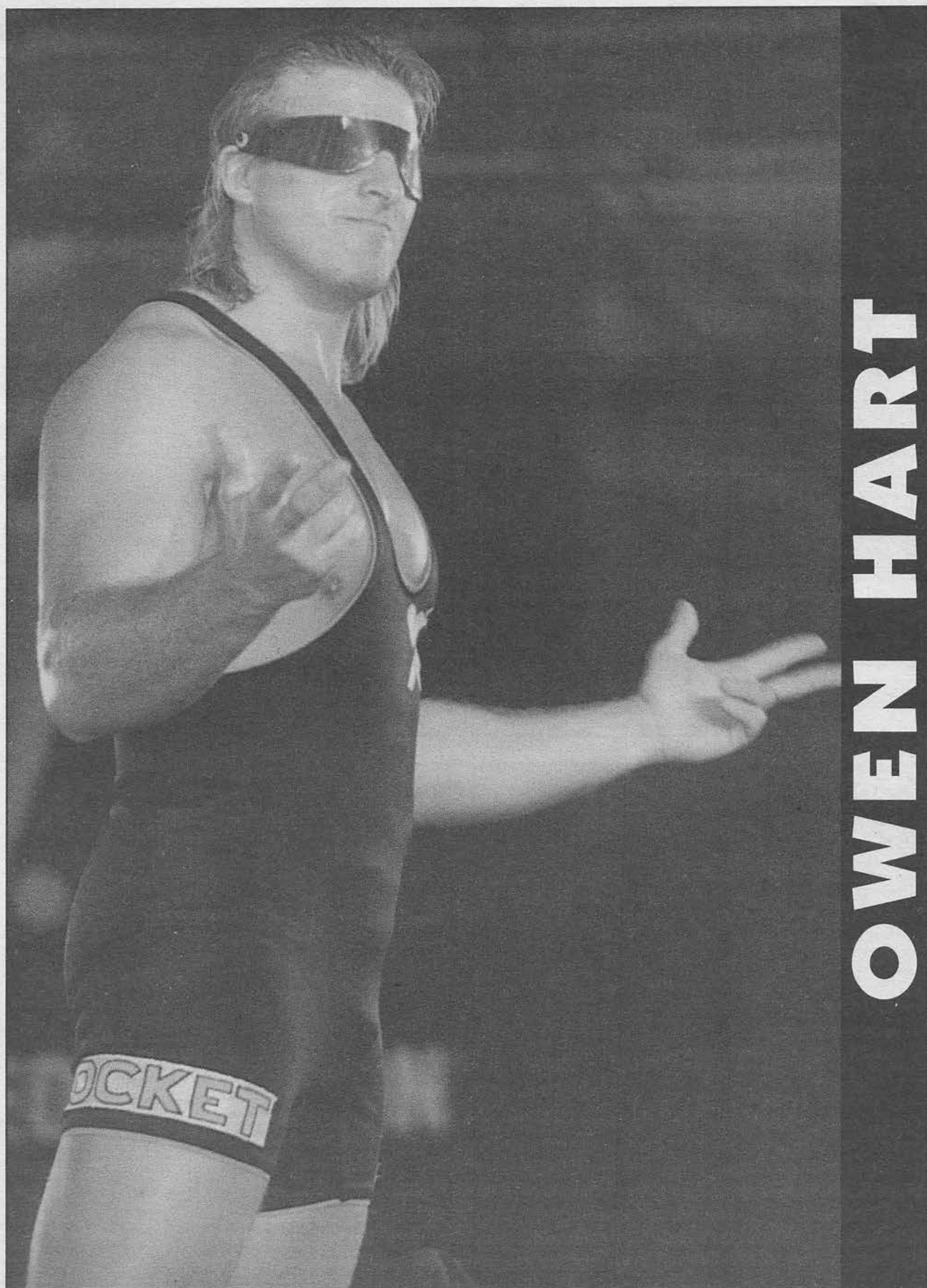
title (*"Jim Neidhart is the best partner anyone could ask for"*) ... Later formed a team called High Energy with Koko B. Ware ... Hart and Ware failed to unseat Money Inc. as World tag team champs (*"Koko was a weak partner"*) ... Shocked USWA fans when, after beating Papa Shango for the heavyweight title, he brutally attacked Jerry Lawler (*"Looking back, it was a mistake to go after a man of royalty"*) ... Lost the belt to Lawler two weeks later, but continued to help Bret in his feud with "The King" (*"Bret never could handle a feud on his own"*) ... Animosity between Owen and Bret started building at the 1993

Survivor Series, where Owen, Bret, Bruce, and Keith Hart beat Shawn Michaels and his Knights ... Owen was furious that his brothers attended to Bret, who had hurt his leg, while he was getting pinned by Michaels (*"It's like the world revolves around him!"*) ... The brothers seemed to iron out their differences in the ensuing weeks ... Owen and Bret lost to the World tag team champion Quebecers at the Royal Rumble because Bret's injured leg prevented him from continuing the match. Owen was angry that Bret didn't tag him and attacked him after the match (*"He had it coming"*) ... Pinned Bret at Wrestle-

Mania X, though Bret beat Yokozuna for the World title later on the card (*"A great day, except for the very end"*) ... Won the 1994 King of the Ring tournament, beating Razor Ramon in the finals after Neidhart interfered (*"'The Rocket' became 'King Of Harts'"*) ... Lost every rematch with Bret, including a steel cage bout at SummerSlam. He and Neidhart attacked Bret afterward, but Davey Boy Smith rescued him (*"Another misguided member of the family"*) ... Continues to pursue both the World and Intercontinental titles (*"It's just a matter of time"*). □



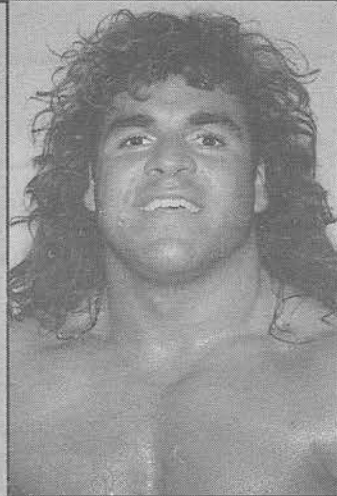
Owen Hart has emerged from his brother Bret's shadow during the past year, even using Bret's "sharpshooter" as a submission hold, but "The Rocket" has yet to capture a title in the WWF.



OWEN HART

Where Are They NOW

Do you have a favorite wrestler who has left your area? Are you wondering where he is today? Then this special column is just for you. Each month we will update the whereabouts of four current or former wrestlers



SCOTT PUTSKI

A one-time regular competitor in the now-defunct Global Wrestling Federation, Putski now wrestles mainly in Mexico and Japan. "I love to travel and challenge wrestlers with different styles, like those in the other countries," he said. Scott, the son of former WWF

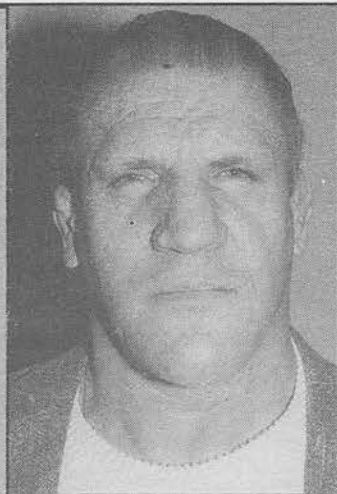
great Ivan Putski, recently teamed with The Warlord and Bob Backlund to capture the WAR six-man tag team title in Japan, but they were beaten by Gedo, Jado, and Hiromichi Fuyuki a week later.



JIM ROSS

The broadcaster many regard as the best in wrestling has finally landed what seems to be a steady on-air position—with Smoky Mountain Wrestling. "Smoky is a real wild federation," Ross said. "Calling the blow-by-blow is a challenge. You don't

know what's gonna happen next. They've got great talent, and I'm excited to be part of it." He also livens SMW telecasts by hosting "Confrontation With Jim Ross," a segment in which two rivals wage a war of words.



BRUNO SAMMARTINO

The "Living Legend" remains retired, and actually has very little connection to wrestling these days. "I just like to sit back and remember the good ol' days," said Sammartino, who resides in Pittsburgh. He still works out every day, running

six to seven miles and lifting weights for several hours. His wife, Carol, is happy that he's home all the time now. "It was a nightmare when he was away all the time during his days as a champion," she says.



BILL WATTS

"Cowboy" Bill, who was a top-notch wrestler during the 1960s and '70s, is probably best remembered for his tenure as WCW's executive vice president of wrestling operations in 1992. Since leaving WCW, he has been involved in a private business in Okla-

homa City. "I had a great run in wrestling," says Watts, whose son Erik still competes in the federation. "Now I'm using my mind in other venues, but wrestling will always hold a special place in my heart."

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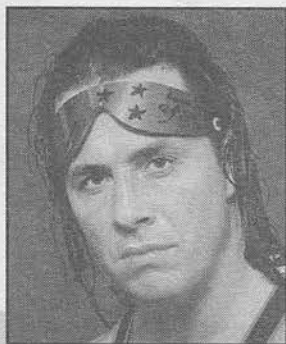


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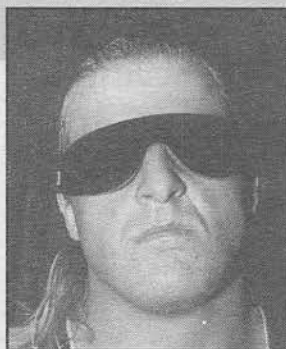
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NEWS FROM THE

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA BY JASON MASON



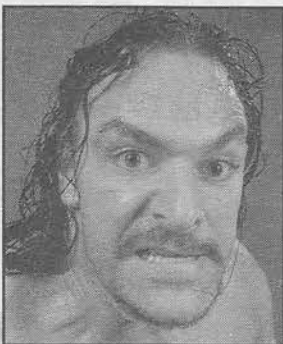
BRET HART VS. OWEN HART



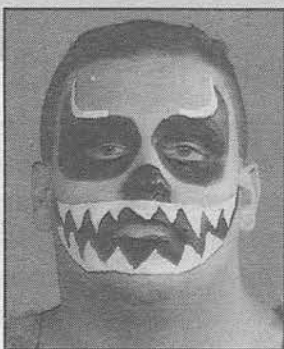
The latest round of the WWF's sibling rivalry took place at Winnipeg Arena. Shortly after the match started, Owen left the ring for the dressing room and returned with brother-in-law Jim Neidhart, Bret's one-time tag team partner. Owen attempted a "sharpshooter" against his big brother, but Bret mounted a comeback and won with the same submission hold to keep his WWF World title.

OTHER BOUTS: Lex Luger (replacing Tatanka) pinned Irwin R. Schyster after a forearm blow ... WWF World tag team champions Diesel & Shawn Michaels defeated Headshrinkers Fatu & Sionne by disqualification ... Duke "The Dumpster" Droese pinned Quebecer Pierre ... The Undertaker beat Yokozuna in a casket match ... World Women's champion Alundra Blayze pinned Bull Nakano ... The Kid pinned Kwang the Ninja.

TAYLOR, MI BY ERNIE AVERY



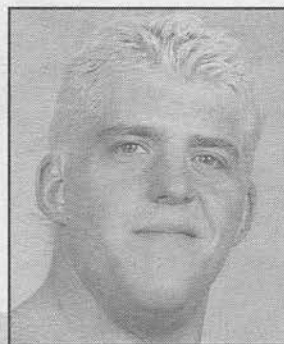
SABU VS. TASMANIAC



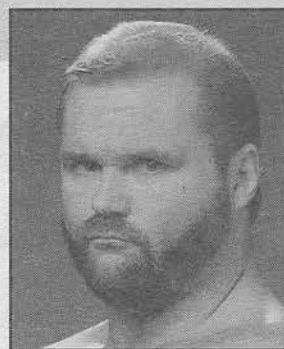
Since this was a *Tasmanian* death match, in which each wrestler could bring any weapon into the ring and falls counted anywhere, some expected Sabu to be at a disadvantage. Not so. Sabu executed a moonsault early on, while Tasmaniac showed off his underrated skills with several suplexes. Sabu withstood incredible punishment and earned the pin after executing an Arabian face buster. Incidentally, the weapons used by both included a car radiator, a TV, a VCR, a vacuum cleaner, and an aluminum bat!

OTHER BOUTS: Judge Dredd beat Scott "The Rock" Stevens ... Al Snow defeated Tommy Dreamer ... Shawn Brown battled Brian Rollins to a double-countout ... Osamu Nishimura pinned Ray "Crippler" Roberts ... Thunderstrike beat Lance Gunn & Rick Matrix ... Mikey Doyle pinned Bobby Clancy ... Ray Roberts pinned Jimmy Vee.

HOUSTON, TX BY CAROLE RANDALL



DUSTIN RHODES VS. ARN ANDERSON

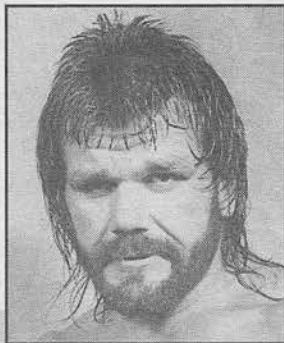


The action was fierce in this match at the AstroArena, and began even before the bell rang as both wrestlers attacked each other in the aisle while on their way to the ring. Anderson was managed by Col. Robert Parker and assisted by Meng. Eventually, Meng interfered, giving Rhodes the match by disqualification. Afterward, Dustin was immediately attacked by Anderson, and Meng. Terry Taylor and Brad Armstrong came to ringside to help Rhodes chase Anderson and Meng from the ring.

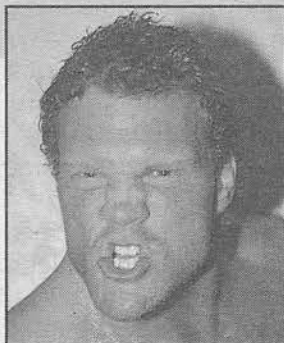
OTHER BOUTS: Terry Funk & Bunkhouse Buck defeated Hector & Chavo Guerrero ... Sting pinned Ric Flair (managed by Sherri Martel) ... Steve Austin beat Rick Steamboat ... Kane (of Harlem Heat) defeated Brad Armstrong with his feet on the ropes ... Lord Steven Regal pinned Larry Zbyszko ... Terry Taylor pinned Jean-Paul LeVeque.

WRESTLING CAPITALS

**LAS VEGAS, NV
BY HARRISON SIMON**



**STEVE WILLIAMS
VS.
SID VICIOUS**



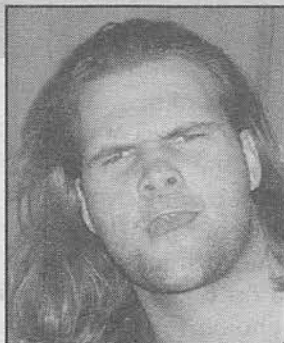
Williams, the current Triple Crown champion in Japan, wrestled extremely well at the MGM Grand Garden, although Vicious gave him a battle with several power moves. Williams fought back and was ready for the pin after he executed a suplex from the top rope, but he was attacked by Vicious' old pal Dan Spivey. Vicious was thus disqualified for outside interference.

OTHER BOUTS: Dan Spivey beat Johnny Ace for the vacant UWF Americas title when Ace's manager, Missy Hyatt, threw in the towel. Spivey and Hyatt then left the ring together ... "Wildman" Jack Armstrong beat Mando Guerrero for the UWF junior heavyweight title ... Tyler Mane beat Steve Ray ... The Killer Bees beat The New Powers of Pain ... Little Tokyo beat Karate Kid for the UWF Midget title ... Candi Devine pinned Tina Moretti for the UWF Women's title.

**DES MOINES, IA
BY MOLLY BURNS**



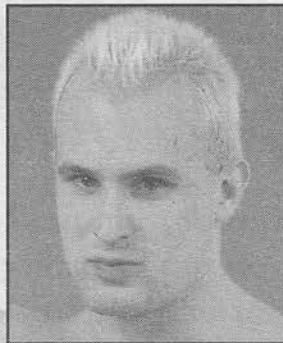
**JERRY LAWLER
VS.
DUKE DROESE**



These WWF rivals battled at Veterans Memorial Coliseum, and many weird things happened. Lawler used brass knuckles throughout the match, and then achieved the pinfall with his own feet on the ropes. The referee reversed the decision after a second official alerted him to what had happened. Droese then kicked Lawler, put his trash can over the Memphis monarch's head, and repeatedly hit the top of the can with the lid. Lawler was awarded the match by disqualification.

OTHER BOUTS: The Undertaker beat Yokozuna in a casket match ... Lex Luger pinned The Barbarian (substituting for Crush) ... Bart Gunn & The Kid (substituting for Billy Gunn) defeated Well Dunn ... Nikolai Volkoff pinned Bruiser Vastel (substituting for Virgil) ... The Kid battled Abe "Knuckleball" Schwartz to a double-countout.

**JOHNSON CITY, TN
BY RON DONNELLY**

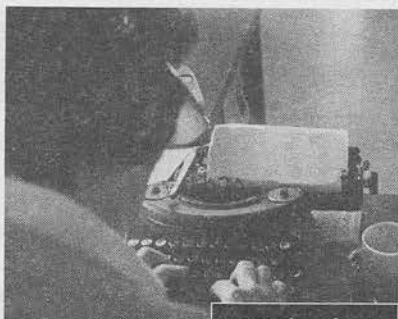


**CHRIS CANDIDO
VS.
BRIAN LEE**



These one-time tag team partners continued their feud, with Tammy Fytch in Candido's corner. Fytch called Lee a "big goof" before the bout began, and Brian retaliated with a slew of insults directed at Fytch, much to the crowd's delight. Candido and Lee fought long and hard in front of the fans at Freedom Hall, and Candido finally won when he kayoed Lee with Fytch's purse. By the time the fans told the referee what had happened, Candido had retreated to the rulebreakers' dressing room.

OTHER BOUTS: Smoky Mountain tag team champions The Rock 'n' Roll Express fought The Gangstas to a no-contest ... SMW heavyweight champion Tony Anthony defeated Bruiser Bedlam by disqualification after Jim Cornette interfered ... Tracey Smothers & Bob Armstrong beat Jim Cornette & Killer Kyle when Armstrong pinned Cornette ... Lance Storm pinned The Hornet.



Matt Brock's **Plain** *Speaking*

Harder than nails, veteran wrestling reporter Matt Brock has logged more miles covering wrestling than any other journalist. Every month Matt will travel to the sport's hotbeds, reporting everything he sees without fear or favor



BOCKWINKEL & HEENAN

One plus one doesn't add up to two anymore, not when Nick Bockwinkel's in the building. The WCW commissioner has made some strange decisions over the past few months, which gets one to thinking that maybe he wasn't such a good choice for commissioner after all. First, he suspends Ric Flair in the U.S. but lets him wrestle for the World title in Europe, now this Hacksaw Duggan-Steve Austin-Rick Steamboat nonsense. Bockwinkel made a much better wrestler than he does a commissioner. He was one of the least flamboyant rule-breakers I've ever seen, but he got the job done. I remember when he lost the AWA World title to Otto Wanz. The entire wrestling world—at least the half on this side of the pond—was shocked, but Bockwinkel looked me straight in the eye and said, "Matt, the sun doesn't shine on the same dog's butt every day. Wanz had his day. I'll have mine." So he went about his business and regained the title

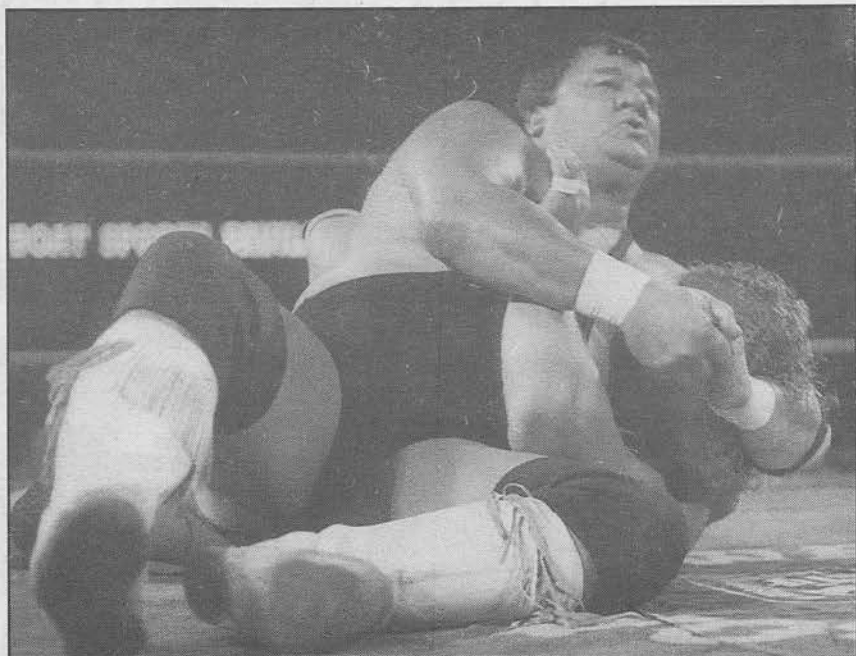
ROANOKE, VA

less than two months later. That was in 1982, when the AWA was alive, if not quite kicking, and Curt Hennig had nothing more than some peach fuzz on his face. Sherri Martel was considered pretty (there was a time in the 1940s when she would have been considered one hot tamale, let me tell you) and Verne Gagne was thinking about another comeback. All things considered, I figured Bockwinkel would make a pretty good commissioner and there was no reason to think I'd be as wrong as I turned out to be. Maybe he's still spending too much time around Bobby Heenan. I've seen them together more than a few times lately. Logic escaped Bockwinkel's decision this time and it happened on pay-per-view TV. Once Rick Steamboat decided he was in no shape to wrestle, Bockwinkel should have called off the match and found a substitute opponent for Austin in a non-title match. Instead, he set off a chain of events in which he basically handed the belt to Austin, then took it away from him and handed it to Hacksaw Duggan. Don't get

me wrong: Duggan's a decent wrestler, but he couldn't beat Austin on his best day. Well, this time he beat Austin because Bockwinkel shoved Austin back into the ring and Austin, shocked to pieces, lost in 27 seconds. It will never happen again. Some people around here think Duggan got the big break because he's friends with Hogan. I wish it made that much sense. If you ask me, Bockwinkel blew the call.

It takes a brave man to step into the ring with The Undertaker after what happened at SummerSlam. I'm not one to believe in the after-life, but it makes an old man pause a bit when he sees what the real Undertaker did to the impostor. Maybe there is hope after all, although after the life I've led, I'm not sure I'm headed anywhere pleasant, anyway. Don't think the big man's going to care much that I didn't follow the doctor's orders and went off the low-cholesterol diet, but he might have something to say about those thousand or so bottles of scotch and the time in Philly with some broad whose name I forgot about a hundred sins ago. Jerry Lawler is one of the only people who's stupid enough ... or brave enough ... or just plain egotistical enough to wrestle The Undertaker in a casket match. Maybe he just doesn't care what happens. Lawler said to me, "Matt, you take your chances in this game. I don't believe in that Undertaker stuff any more than you do, but I want to know what's in Paul Bearer's urn. Who knows? Maybe I'll find the secret to life in there." The only thing that makes sense to me is that certain wrestlers are fascinated by The Undertaker and have to see what he's all about, first-hand. Meanwhile, seems to me that

WHITE PLAINS, NY



WAHOO McDANIEL

Lawler, who by the way was destroyed in the casket match, should forget about The Undertaker and save his energy for Sid Vicious.

Watching Wahoo McDaniel wrestle takes me back about 20 years and makes me feel like a young man again. I don't know if I'm still writing the way I did 20 years ago, but it looks to me—and these old eyes might be deceiving me at this point—like the big chief is going strong as ever. Feels like it, too. "I'll start feeling old when I get out of this ring and start spending my days in some rickety old rocking chair," McDaniel said. "The way I see it, none of these kids have half of my experience and most of them don't know what I know. They might be younger and stronger, but they're not smarter, and brains is at least half of this game." Reminds me of something Yogi Berra said about baseball being 90 percent mental and the other half being something else. I can't remember what. Wahoo doesn't care where he wrestles,

even if it's in a high school in the middle of North Carolina, as long as there's a wrestling ring and an opponent. But you'd better believe that McDaniel isn't still wrestling 33 years after he made his pro debut so that some kids can say they saw a museum relic. He's still in this for real.

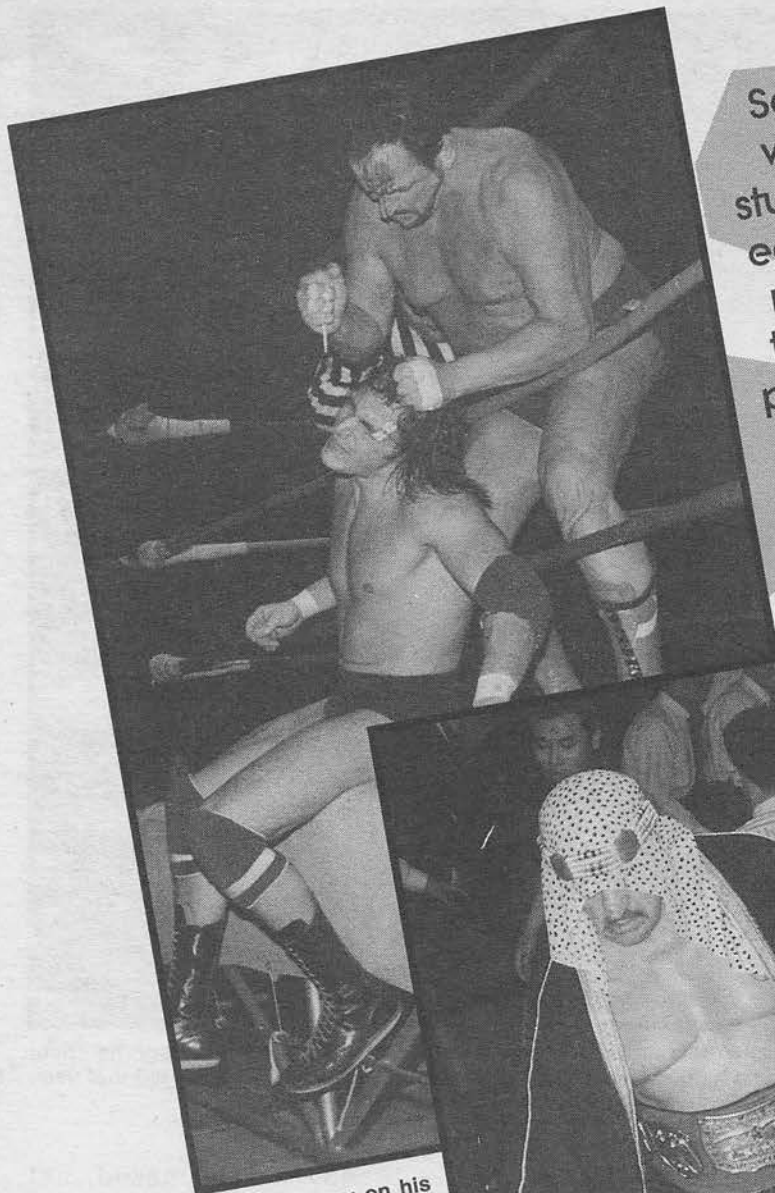
Owen Hart should find another place to wrestle besides the WWF and Diesel and Shawn Michaels would both be better off if they put aside their differences and stayed together. An unscientific poll taken before a match here revealed that 90 percent of WWF wrestlers don't trust either Michaels or Diesel. Michaels might be running out of potential partners and Diesel's career took off when he started associating with Michaels. You'd think both of them would notice the trend and just shut up and wrestle. But these days, nobody shuts up and wrestles. Come to think of it, nobody ever has. Except Bockwinkel, and he's another story altogether. □

TRINITY, NC

PITTSBURGH, PA

**SABU
VS.
THE SHEIK**

**APPRENTICESHIP
OF AGONY**



Seven years ago, Sabu was nothing but a raw student having his smooth edges roughed out by his mentor, The Sheik. It was then that the India native passed the most important test of his young life. Now, one of Sheik's closest associates has come forth to tell the whole story!

The Sheik didn't take it easy on his protege when they met in the ring back in 1987; he carved up Sabu like he would any other opponent (above). Seven years later, teacher and student are still occasional tag team partners (right).



Photos by Gary J. Kamensack

By Admahr Harrah

[Editor's note: To properly report on the relationship between Sabu and Sheik, we needed to enlist the services of a man with knowledge not only of professional wrestling, but of Sabu and Sheik's native lands and languages. Admahr Harrah, a close associate of The Sheik, is just such a man.]

SABU HAD NO way of measuring his progress during his years of training with The Sheik. All he knew was the bags got heavier every time he and Sheik went on a trip, even though it seemed his mentor wore the same clothes over and over again. The most encouraging words he heard were, "Have

another piece of lamb, kid." No compliments, not even an occasional smile to tell Sabu he was getting better.

When Sheik said, "You'll know when you're ready," Sabu wasn't sure *how* he was supposed to know. Then, one day, The Sheik came to Sabu with a message, a few simple words that told him the

time was coming.

"When you're ready for the best," The Sheik said, "you will know it and I will know it. Only then will you wrestle the greatest competitor I can offer you. I cannot tell you his identity, but I will when it happens."

Young Sabu figured his big day was right around the corner. As it turned out, years went by until the big day arrived. Meanwhile, the days in the gym got longer. The Sheik kept offering new challenges to his student. Sabu responded by testing himself when a lesser man would have succumbed.

And the bags got heavier.

This was part of Sabu's apprenticeship: the chance to play daily valet for The Sheik. It was The Sheik's reminder to Sabu that "you're not there yet. You still have a lot to learn." The Sheik always kept his student in his place. Even during their breaks from training, Sheik sat, but forced Sabu to stand.

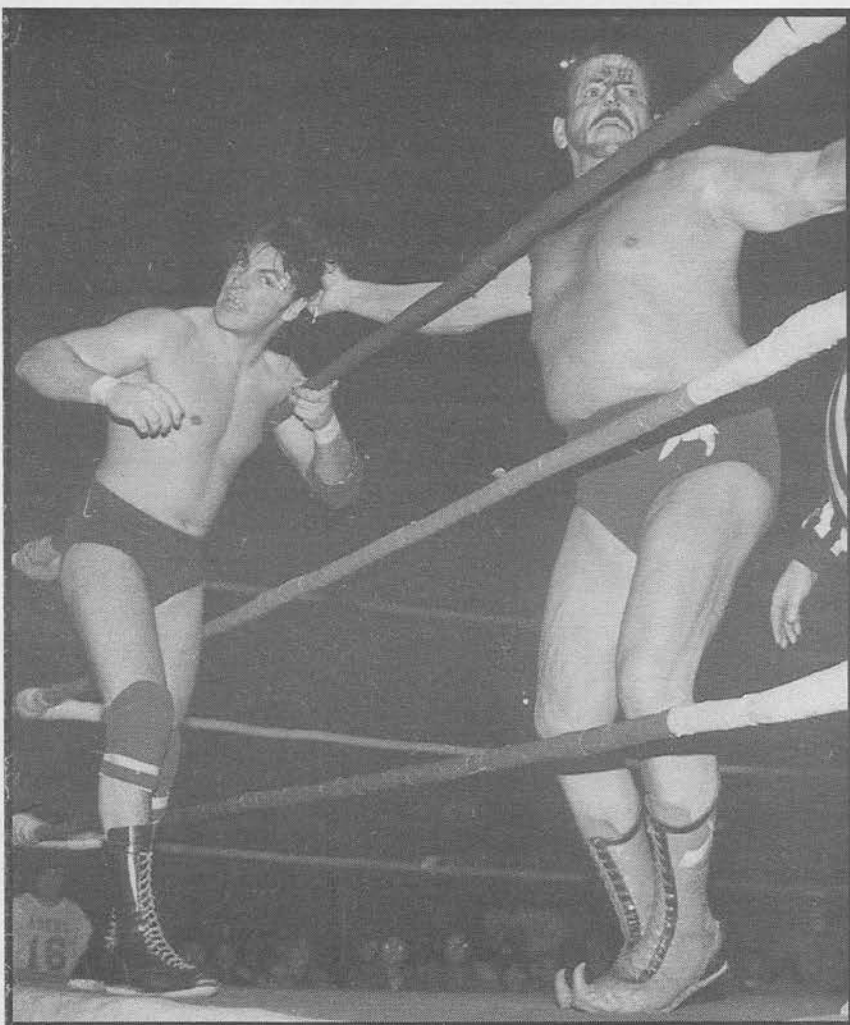
"Mental toughness," Sheik said. "You must learn to be tough."

Sabu thought he was learning to be subservient. That is, until the day of the test arrived.

By that time, Sabu had perfected nearly a dozen variations of the spectacular moonsault that would make him one of the feared men in wrestling. His body was fit. Sheik had conditioned Sabu to the point where he could compete in—and win—a triathlon, and be ready for another one in 30 minutes. Sabu learned about violence and what it means to go in for the kill from the ultimate master of mayhem. Sheik tutored Sabu in the dark side of wrestling; the youngster was a willing student.

Finally, it was time for the test.

Sabu was shocked one afternoon when Sheik told him, "You're



Sabu actually drew first blood against Sheik, but Sheik, even though he spent years training him, showed the youngster no mercy. He was impressed that Sabu was able to take so much punishment and still fight back.

just about ready." It had been a particularly frustrating day of training. Sabu missed two moonsaults, cracking two ribs in the process, and was nearly pinned by a sparring partner. It was steaming-hot inside the gym, and Sabu looked like he was ready for a long nap. He stood in front of The Sheik's locker and gulped down a gallon of water as sweat ran down his face. Finally, The Sheik spoke.

"You feel as if you have failed, but you have succeeded," The Sheik said. "This may have been your worst day, but two years ago it would have been your best. You realize your mistakes and will not make them again. You are ready."

"Ready?" Sabu asked, not trusting his ears. "Ready for what?"

"Ready for the test. Ready for your match," The Sheik responded. "You are ready for the best opponent I can offer you."

Sabu and The Sheik intensified their training in the week leading up to the big match. On the afternoon of the bout, just before Sabu went home to prepare, The Sheik told him, "Remember what I've taught you."

"I will," Sabu said. "I will see you later."

"No, you won't," The Sheik said. "I won't be there."

Sabu was shocked, but Sheik's

expression told him not to ask any questions.

Hours later, Sabu had his answer. He thought—but couldn't be sure—he saw The Sheik sneaking into a side entrance to the arena. When match time arrived, Sabu was introduced first. Then Sabu received the shock of his young life.

"And his opponent," the ring

to the eye. While doubled-over in pain, Sabu realized he had the choice of fighting or dying in the ring. This test was a final exam.

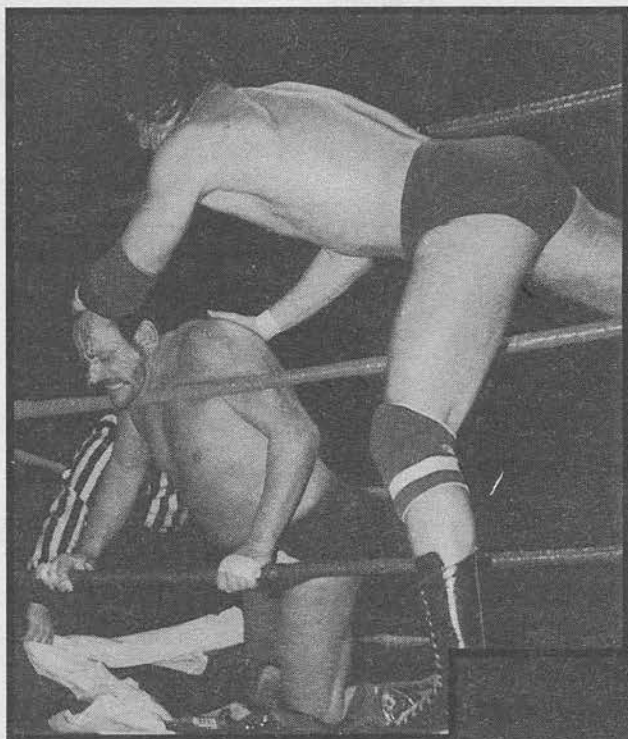
When Sabu raised his head, he saw The Sheik coming at him with forearm raised. Sabu ducked, grabbed Sheik's arm as he passed by, and flipped him over the top rope and onto the exposed concrete floor. The Sheik struck

the hard ground with a tremendous thud, but got up smiling. Sabu had answered the first question correctly.

There were many more questions and answers during the rest of the match. Sabu drew first blood when he raked a foreign object across Sheik's face. Sheik retaliated in kind. After 10 minutes, both men were delighting in the violence; teacher and student pounded each other relentlessly.

Sheik knew he had taught Sabu well. Sabu's assault was relentless, imaginative, and spectacularly vicious. Sheik tried to remember an opponent who offered him a stiffer test, and couldn't come up with a single name. He rallied to defeat Sabu with a camel clutch, but he was pleased by what he saw from Sabu.

Since then, The Sheik often thinks back upon the night he willingly passed the baton to his student. Since then, Sabu has never let him down. □



Even as a rookie, Sabu knew plenty of great moves, but still wasn't shy about breaking rules and sadistically choking his mentor. Nothing could have made Sheik more proud!

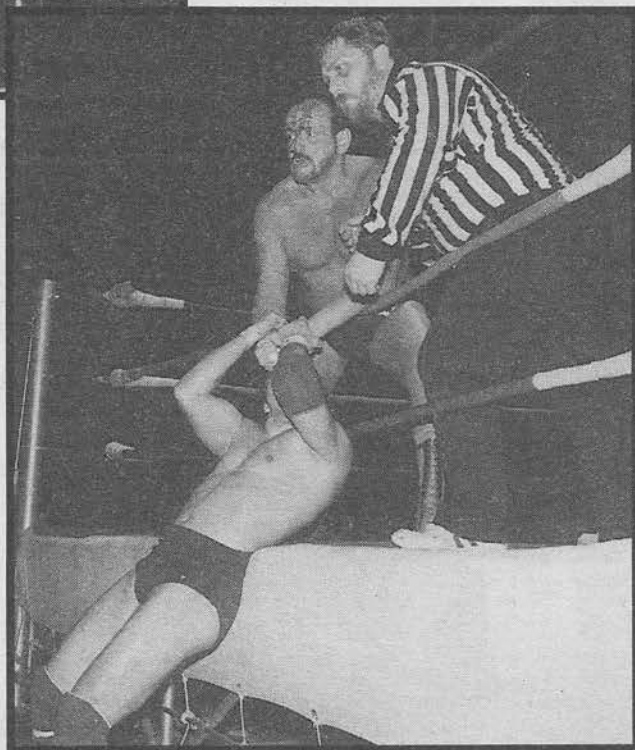
announcer bellowed, "now stepping into the ring, here is ... *The Sheik!*"

Sabu couldn't believe his eyes! Here was his mentor, his idol, the man who became a father figure to him, stepping into the ring to wrestle him.

The opponents met in the center of the ring.

"Give it all you have," The Sheik said. "This is your test. I'm going to give you everything I have."

Sabu didn't know what to do when the bell rang. Then The Sheik surprised him with a knee to the midsection and a sharp poke



Sheik was just as tough on Sabu during the match as he was during their years of training. He gave Sabu no opportunities to get a breather outside the ring and dragged him back in by the hair when it was necessary.

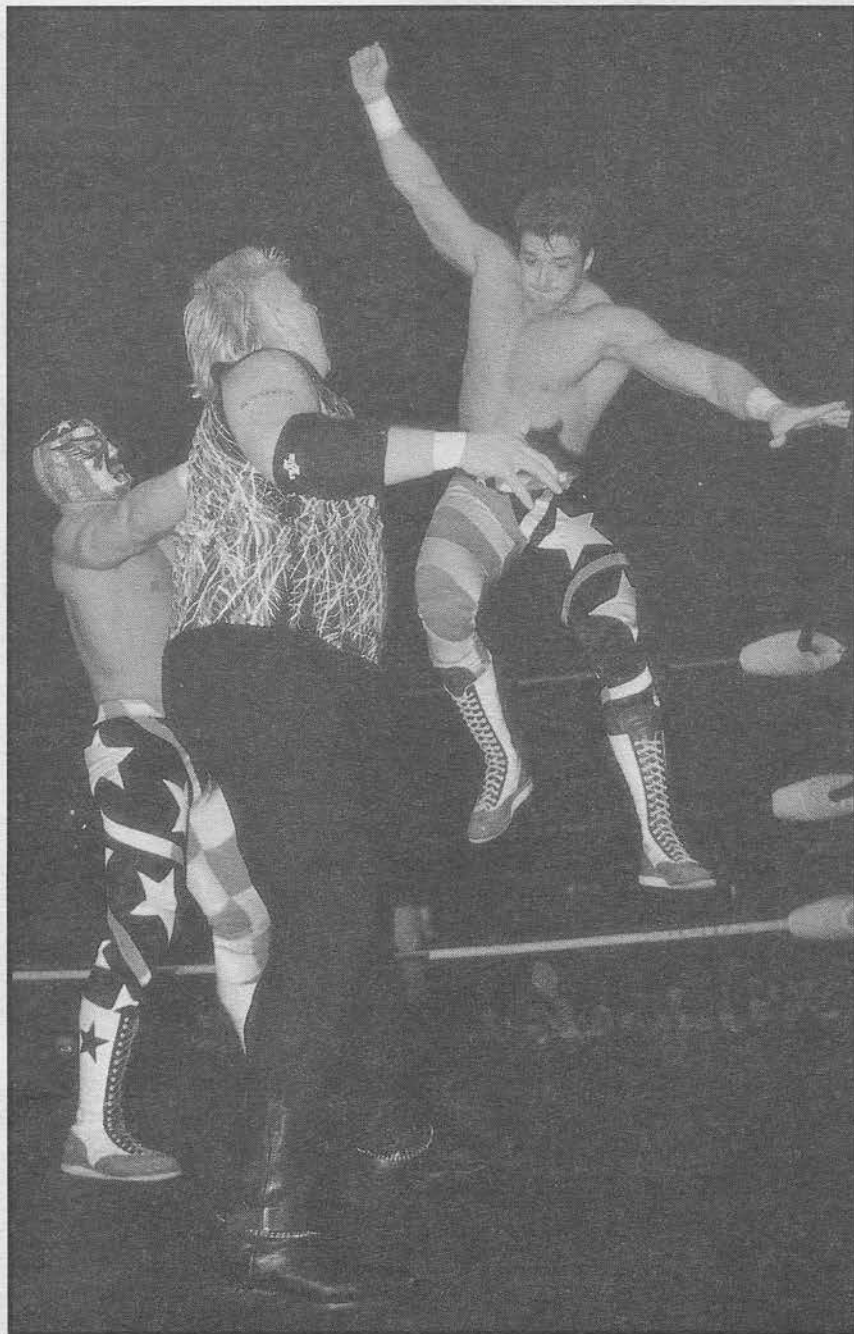
An Exclusive In-Depth Analysis:

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO TAG TEAM WRESTLING?

The teamwork of Stan Lane and Bobby Eaton made The Midnight Express far better than the sum of the talents of the two individuals. There are few teams on the scene today that work together long enough to perfect such maneuvers as the "Rocket Launcher."



Remember The Road Warriors? The Midnight Express? The Fabulous Ones? Unfortunately, tag team wrestling isn't what it used to be. And, sadly, unless, there are some attitude adjustments on the part of today's wrestlers, it may never be again



By Ed Emelett

FOR TRUE FANS of wrestling, one of the things they treasure most is the excitement generated by tag team competition. With four combatants battling it out inside (or outside) the ring, anything can happen. Sometimes the action is so intense, you don't know which pair you should keep your eyes on.

Tag team wrestling is a fascinating counterpoint to the basic premise of man-to-man combat by which wrestling became one of the most popular sports in the world: Multiply the action of singles wrestling by two, and the result is twice as much action, twice as much drama.

Does the equation work? "It could," said Capt. Lou Albano, who has guided 13 different tag team combinations to 17 WWF tag team championships. "But just throwing four wrestlers in the ring, two on each side, is not the way. Tag team wrestling only works when the men in the ring are true teams, not two wrestlers who just happen to join forces."

There is no doubt that the quality of the tag

Marcus Alexander Bagwell and The Patriot have had their share of success, but there seems to be a lack of commitment on both wrestlers' parts to a long-term partnership.

team scene has noticeably dropped off in the past few years. Back in the mid- and late-1980s, tag team wrestling was at its peak. The sheer mayhem and excitement was enough to send chills down your spine. Who can forget The Rock 'n' Roll Express taking tremendous beatings and still having enough courage and tenacity to somehow come away with the victory? Who can forget the Crockett

machine—two people working as one to achieve one goal.

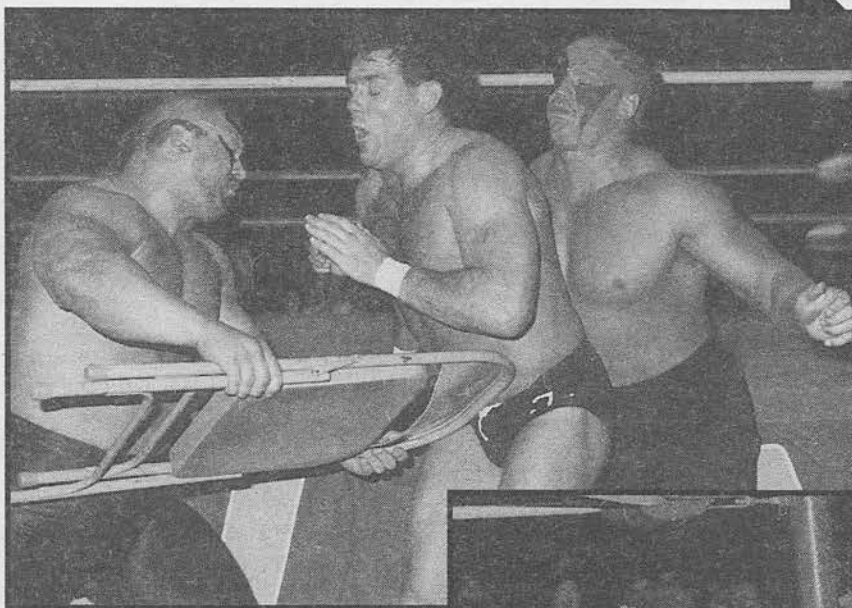
During the 1980s, Tully Blanchard and Arn Anderson were among the premier tag teams in the wrestling world. They became the first team in history to capture both the NWA and WWF World tag team championships. Blanchard has plenty to say about the tag scene, speaking every word as if this was

each other march right to the top.

"In the WWF, [Shawn] Michaels and Diesel are the champions, and there is already talk of dissension in that group. What is going on here?"

Blanchard brings up a good point. What kind of title reign does a team expect to have if they're always fighting with each other? This was never more evident than in the case of Brian Pillman and "Stunning" Steve Austin, The Hollywood Blonds.

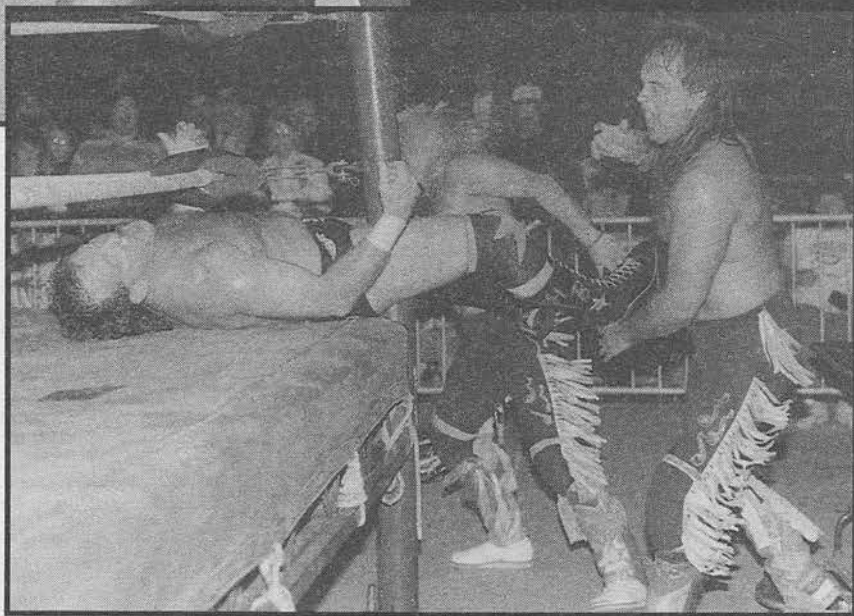
The rulebreaking Blonds had overwhelming potential, com-



Any ranking of tag teams has to begin with the phenomenally successful and popular Road Warriors (left). Both Rick Morton and Robert Gibson (below) will readily admit that their days as successful wrestlers would probably be behind them if the The Rock 'n' Roll Express were not still able to outsmart their makeshift opposition.

Cup, where teams from all corners of the globe competed for a million-dollar prize? And who can forget Demolition, in their quest to shake off all Road Warrior comparisons, destroying everything in their wake on their way to three WWF World tag team titles?

It's memories like these that we all have, and long for again. It can happen again, but only if today's wrestlers change their attitudes in a big way. Simply put, wrestlers have become too selfish, their egos too large, to make the sacrifices needed to forge a solid, unbreakable friendship, which is absolutely necessary if a tag team is going to stay together for a long time. Even though most of the great teams of the 1980s have since been broken up, they were inseparable at their peak. They were a

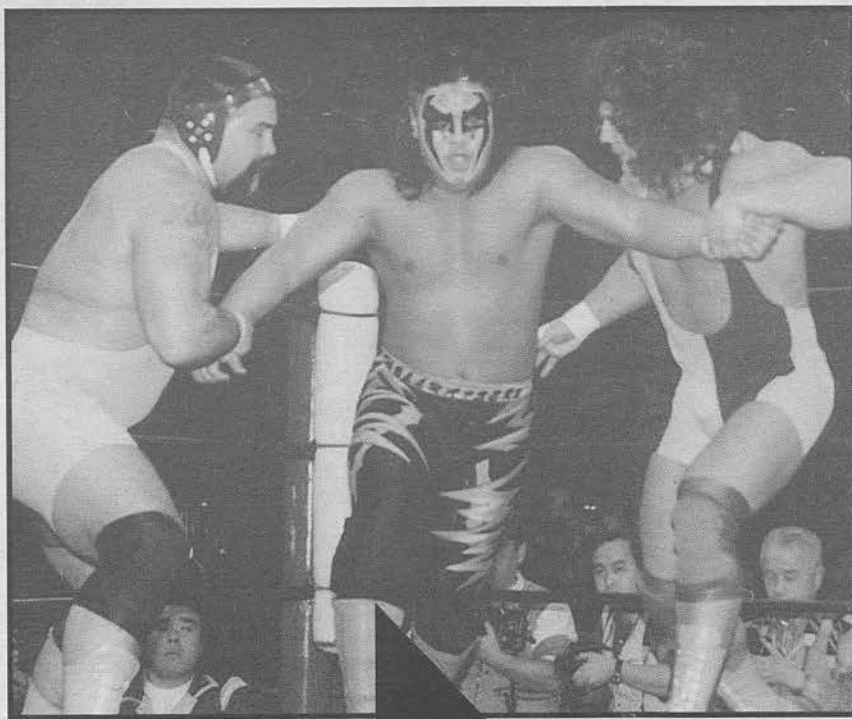


something he wanted to talk about for a long time.

"Yeah, it's not like it used to be," he said. "Look at the tag team situation now. In WCW, Patriot and Bagwell are the champs. You know your tag team scene is weak when you have two guys who barely know

binning the athleticism of Pillman with the textbook scientific ability of Austin. However, they constantly bickered and argued with each other, sometimes even during matches. Ultimately, their partnership could not survive.

"You have to be able to get along,"



emphasized Blanchard. "Heck, me and Arn were like family. We went over match strategies together. We ate dinner together. When we were the champs, we felt that there wasn't a team in the world that could've beaten us. That's the togetherness and confidence you need in becoming a champion.

"It's a lot more difficult to be a tag team wrestler than in singles. In singles, everything is entirely up to you. In tag teams, you need that total trust and confidence in your partner every time you tag him in. Teams today don't have that."

Even something so simple as the name of the tag team is very important, notes Blanchard. "When you give your tag team a certain name, it establishes you as a *team*, not two single wrestlers who just decided to join up. Arn and I were members of The Four Horsemen. Animal and Hawk were The Road Warriors. [Robert] Gibson and [Rick] Morton were The Rock 'n Roll Express.

"These names gave these teams identity, and you couldn't mention

Rick and Scott Steiner could be the last of the great teams, but they seldom compete in the U.S., where tag team competition doesn't generate the interest it did just a few years ago.

Steve Austin and Brian Pillman had the makings of a superb team, but their egos clashed too often and eventually a wedge was driven between them by Col. Robert Parker.

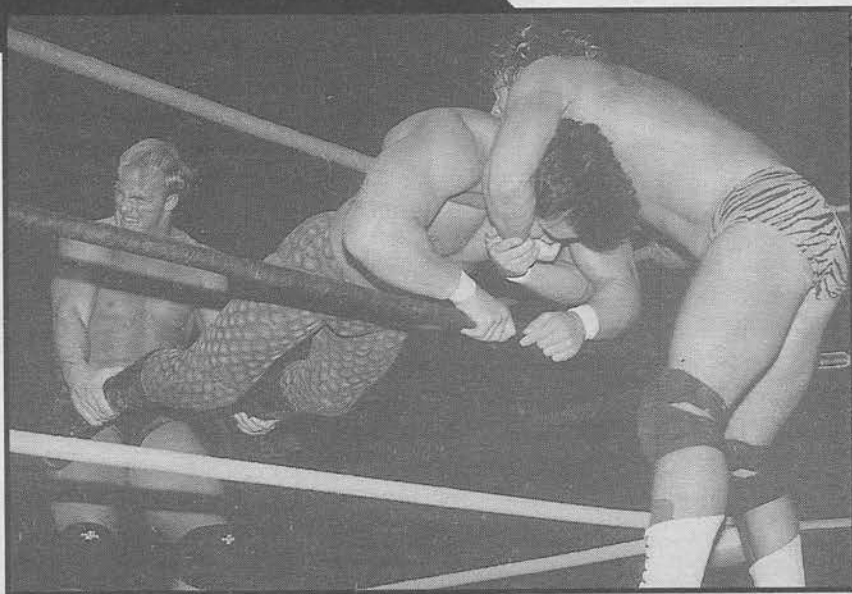
one without mentioning the other. The fans, and more importantly the wrestlers themselves, knew that they were a unit, working together to win the championship."

The only current teams generally known by their nicknames are The Nasty Boys and The Headshrinkers. Both Brian Knobs and Jerry Sags, and Samu and Fatu, have been strictly tag team wrestlers, not dabbling in singles every once in a while. Bagwell and Patriot call themselves Stars 'n' Stripes and claim they will remain a team for the long haul, but you get the sense that the minute they lose the title, their partnership will dissolve.

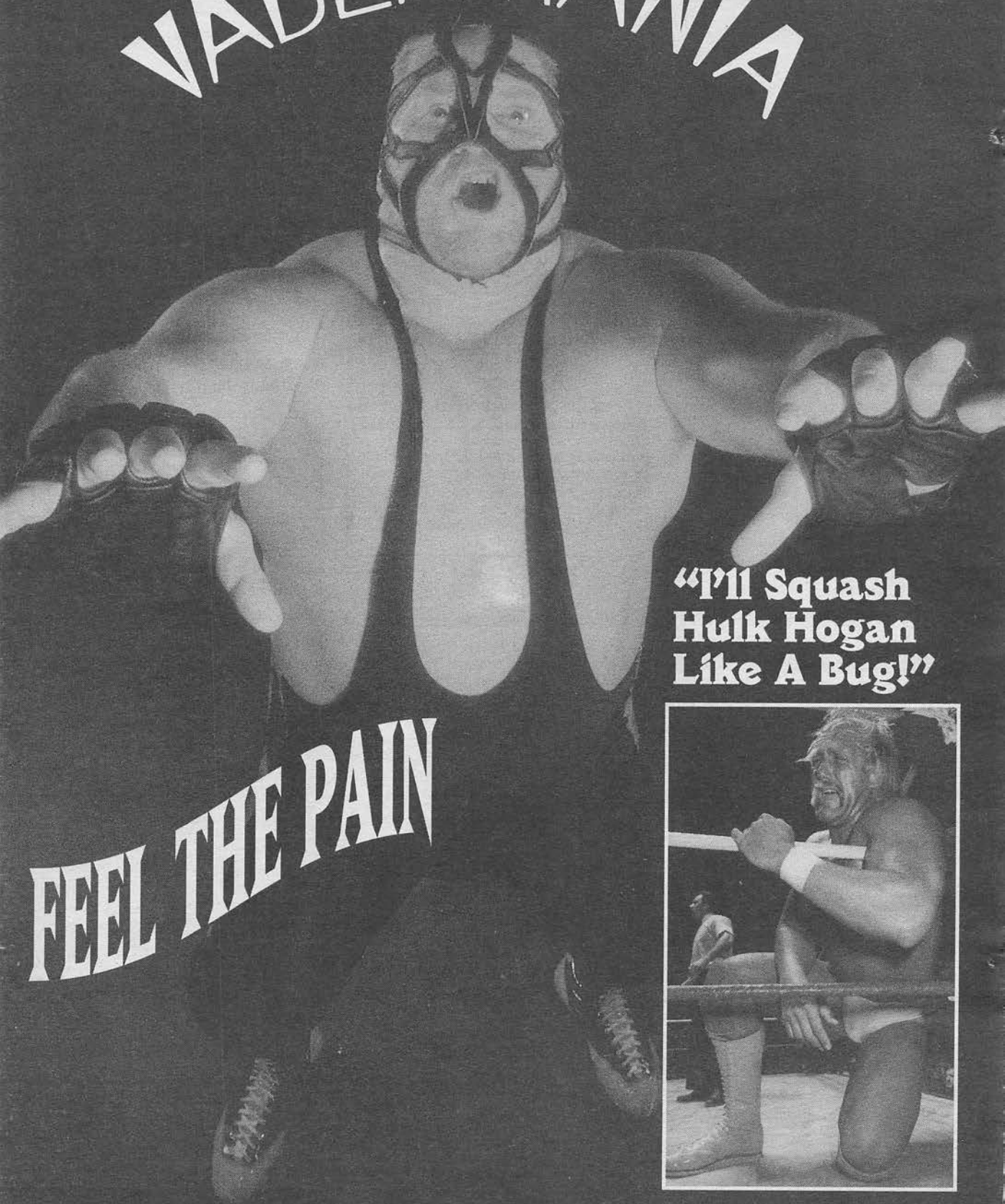
What will the future bring? Can wrestlers put their egos aside and work toward those title belts? Will we ever again see the likes of The Road Warriors or The Midnight Express?

"Absolutely, there is a great future for tag team wrestling," said the ever-optimistic Albano. "What it takes, though, is for one team to set the example of how much dedication and sacrifice is needed, and how much success could come as a result. Then you'll get other teams doing the same, and before you know it, the glory days of tag team wrestling are back."

We can only hope, Capt. Lou. □

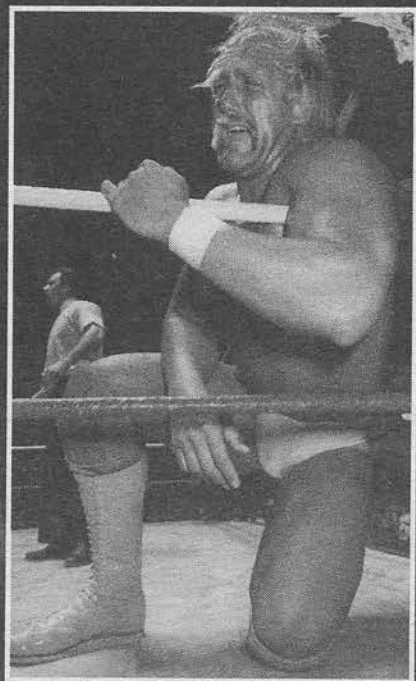


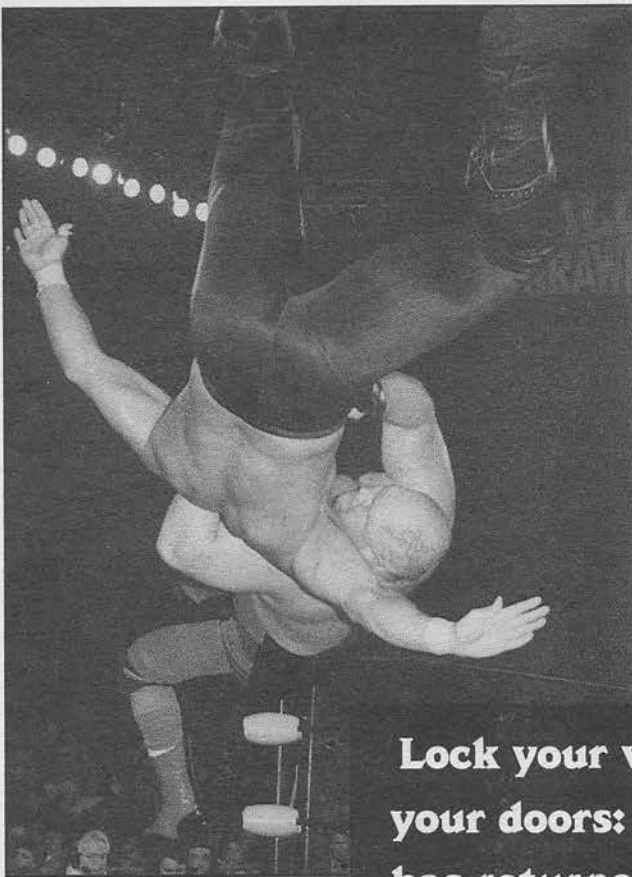
VADERMANIA



**"I'll Squash
Hulk Hogan
Like A Bug!"**

FEEL THE PAIN





After going through a brief depression following his loss of the WCW World title, Vader is wrestling with renewed vigor, handling men like Sting as only he could.

By Eddie Ellner

EXCERPTED FROM A news wire service: "After his belt was given to Ric Flair, Vader fled to the dressing room

where he could not be consoled. 'I want it back!' he shrieked. 'It's mine!' Manager Harley Race put a beefy arm around his fallen protege, but Vader flung it away. The big man had lost and he was not prepared for defeat. Losing had never been part of Big Van Vader's training."

Pro sports is notorious for its disposable heroes. Patience is a liability in a profession where one play, one game, or one moment can make or break a season. Knowing all this, it's still unfathomable what has happened to former WCW champion Big Van Vader. Vader was one of those exquisitely rare superstars whose accomplishments exceeded our expectations. In an age where books are written about flash-in-the-

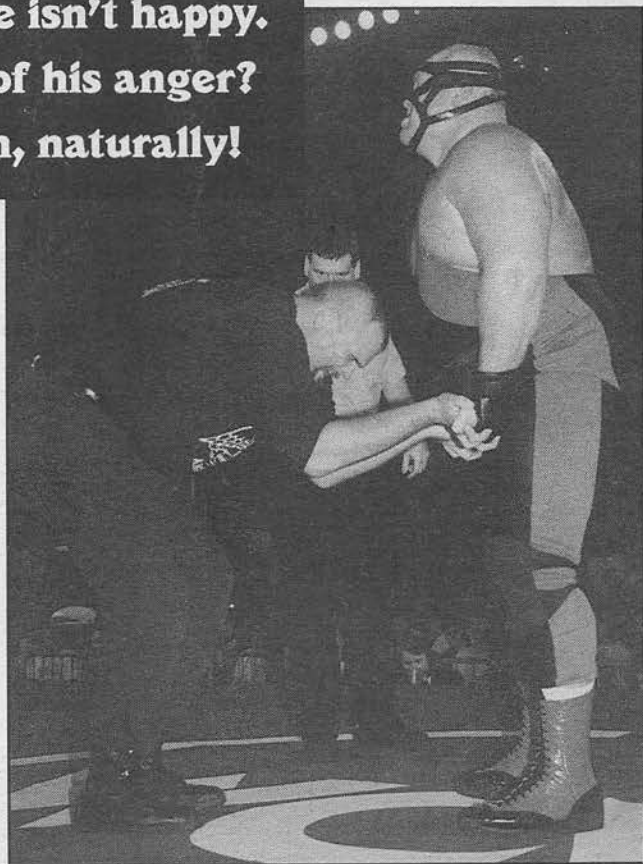
Lock your windows, bolt your doors: Big Van Vader has returned from a mini-slump and he isn't happy. The target of his anger? Hulk Hogan, naturally!

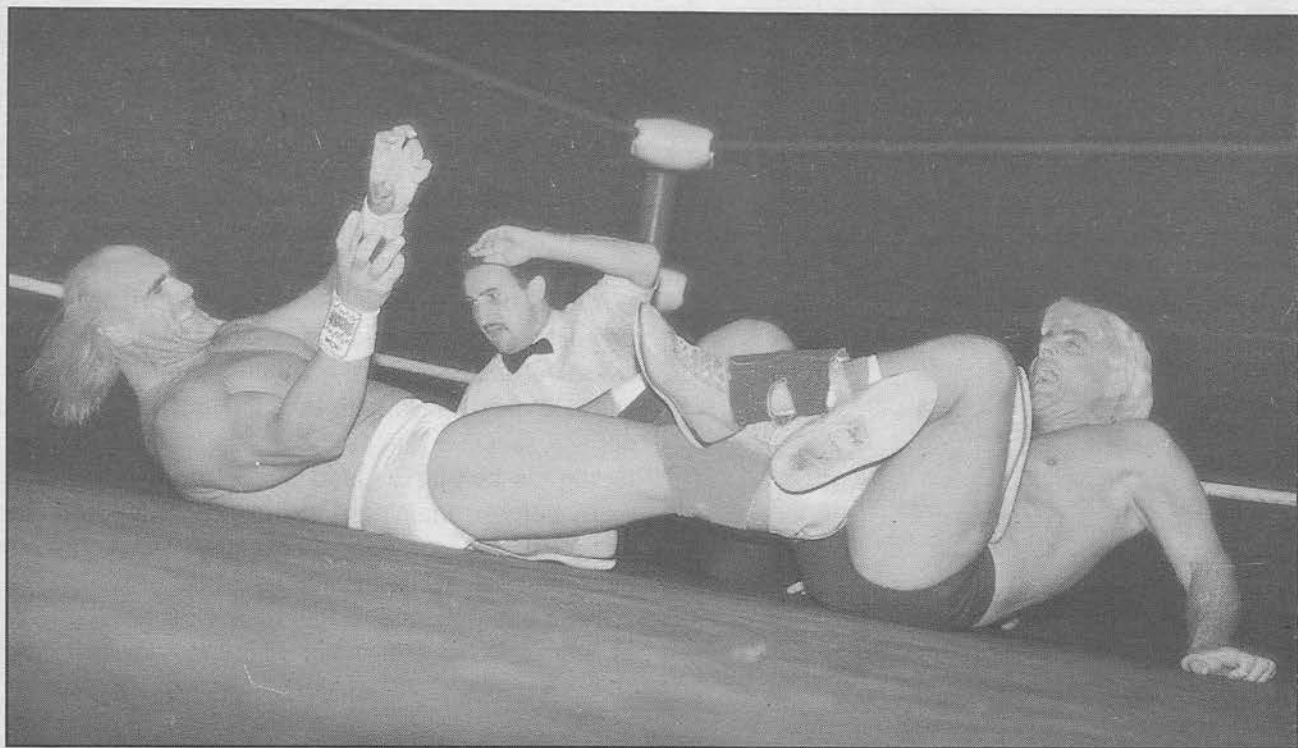
It was believed by insiders that Hogan had set up The Guardian Angel as a shield between he and Vader. Vader was able to power his way past the former Bossman and move another notch up the ratings.

pan teenagers, Vader entered our lives a legend. Stories of his exploits in Japanese rings sounded like the retelling of Greek myths.

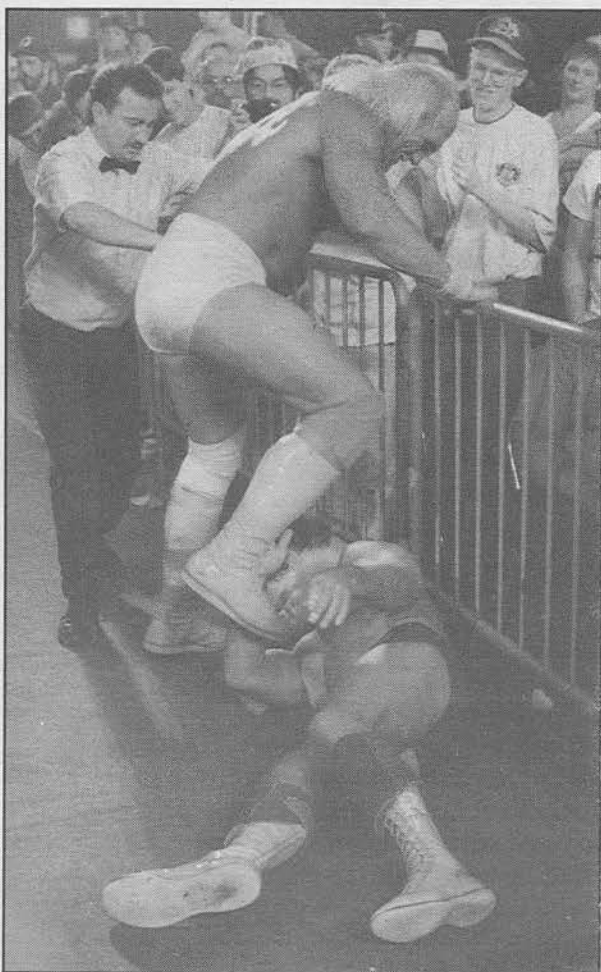
When he arrived in America, he proceeded to demolish our conception of what can be done in a wrestling ring. He quickly captured the WCW World title and dared anyone to take it. He played with his opponents. On a European tour, Vader allowed Sting to win his belt in England and keep it for about a week before regaining it in Ireland. He said at the time: "let Sting worry about customs. I said I'd take it back after our last match and I did."

He made only one mistake. He wrestled Ric Flair at Starrcade '93 in a match Flair said would be his last if he lost. The unstoppable Vader legend ran into the immovable Flair mystique, and the younger man came out second. "That loss was my fault," said Race, whose attempt-





Anger grew within Vader as he was forced into the background while WCW promoted a lengthy series of matches between Hogan and former champion Ric Flair.



ed interference backfired. "That's all I'll say about it."

Despite the defeat, Vader was still recognized as a "player" in the title picture, an ever-imposing figure, and many felt it was just a matter of time before he recovered and reclaimed the crown. "He was," said one WCW official, "the closest thing in terms of aura that we had to a Hulk Hogan."

But the federation wasn't satisfied with a copy. It wanted the real thing, and in an unprecedented courtship, WCW lured Hogan to its rings. Each week, the anticipation of Hogan appearing grew more intense. Fans tuned in to WCW broadcasts just for Hogan updates.

Meanwhile, Ric Flair remained the champion and was riding high, while all other WCW wrestlers suffered. No one suffered more than Vader. "It was was like, 'Why aren't you returning my calls anymore,'" said Race. "It was collusion on the part of WCW promoters. They weren't going to let anything interfere with the Hogan-Flair matchup."

The rebuff took its toll on Vader. He started losing his concentration in matches he would have won in three minutes or less six months before. It got so bad, he Race contemplated a return trip to Japan. That's when the manager earned his money. "I had a little talk with him," Race smiles. "And we straightened a few things out. Athletes are delicate machines. They need to be guided, properly motivated. You have to baby them, but then there are times when you have to be strong for them. This was one

Sting has taken many beatings from Vader and could tell his friend Hogan just how tough the big man is when he gets really angry.

of those times."

The pep talk snapped Vader to attention. The last several weeks have seen him wrestle with new ferocity. "He's a different person," Race agrees. "Once he got his confidence back, it was back to basics. He has more natural tools than 15 men. I'm just glad that I never had to wrestle him."

With Flair slipping out of the title picture, Vader has become Hogan's most substantial challenger. He doesn't intend to remain there long. "I am not comfortable as a challenger," Vader says.

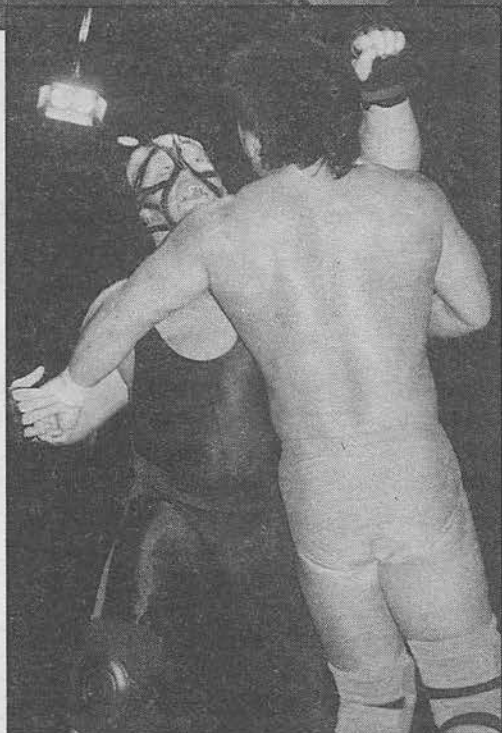
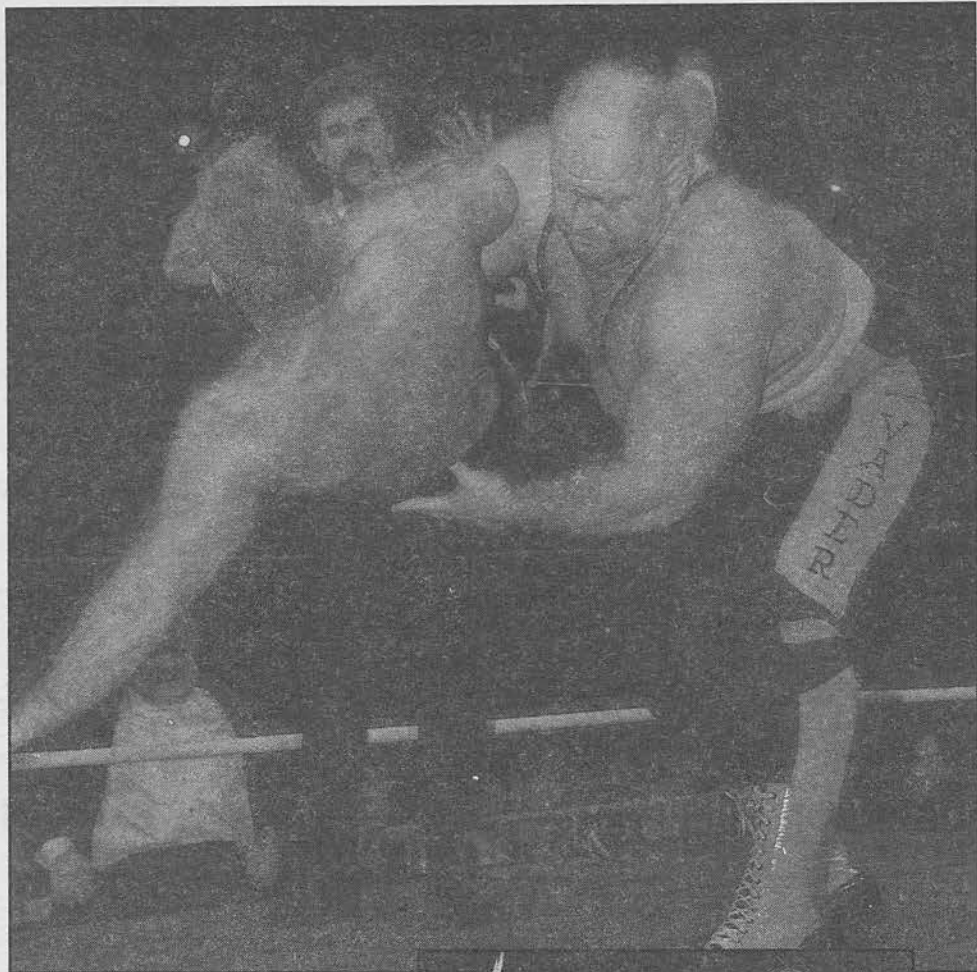
"Hogan has what is mine. He has my title. My fame. My respect. All these things he stole from me. I regard him as I would a man who broke into my house and robbed my most precious possessions. Legally, I can kill such a man. I will destroy Hulk Hogan. I'll squash him like a bug."

"Not only destroy the man, but destroy the hype, kill the myth. What will reporters have to write about if they can't glamorize Hulk Hogan anymore? That is my gift to the pro wrestling world that turned its back on me. I will ruin Hulkamania. I will make reporters go out and earn their money."

It's fascinating how Vader has developed this massive hatred for Hogan. At the time this story was researched, the two had not yet even squared off in the ring.

"That's exactly the point," noted Race. "You can't slight my man. Well, you can try, but he takes it rather personally."

"I am angry," said Vader, his fists clenching and the veins in his neck pulsating. "Anger makes me a better wrestler, but an unhappy person. I won't rest until I'm smiling. I won't rest easy till I have my belt back." □



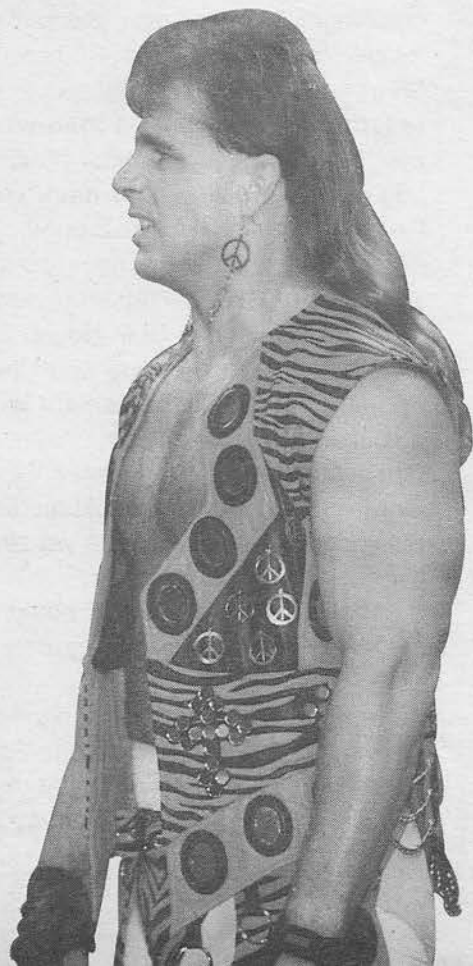
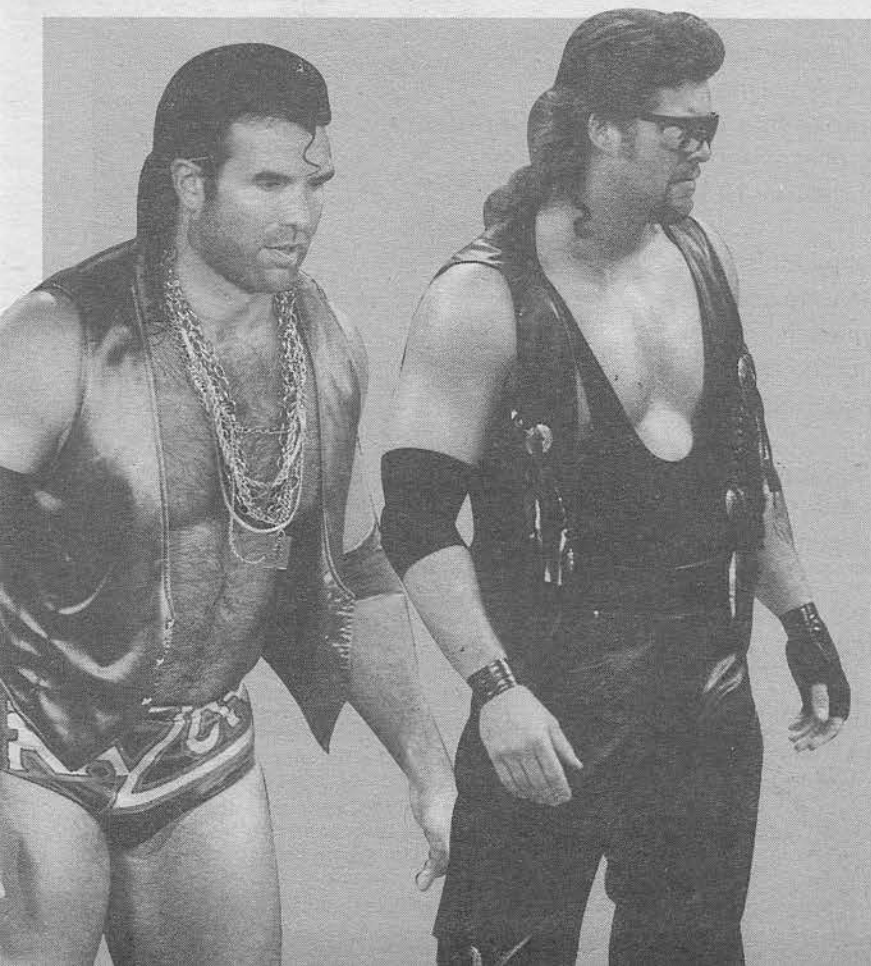
Vader contemplated a full-time return to Japan, the site of some of his greatest triumphs, but manager Harley Race, who wore the NWA belt seven times, was able to revive his wrestler's spirits and help him regain his confidence.

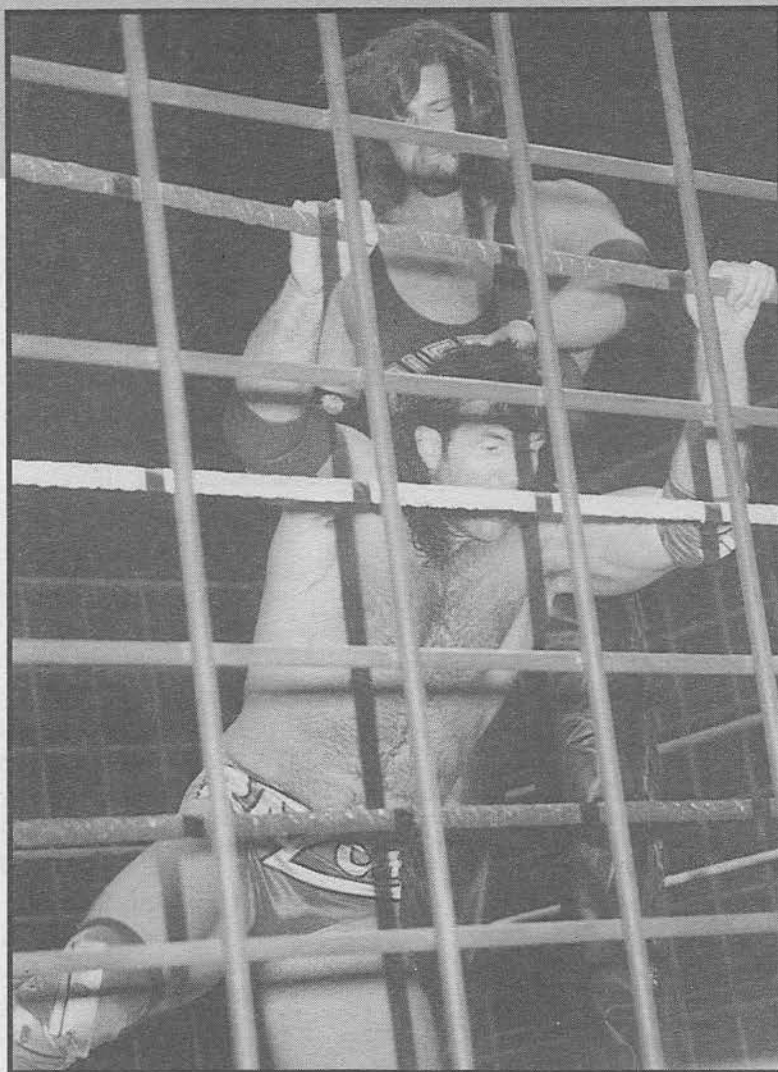
Shawn Michaels' Nightmare Is Coming True

RAZOR & DIESEL

The WWF's Next Dream Team

Shawn Michaels may soon be vulnerable if he splits with Diesel. And the first assault could come from a tag team comprised of his former bodyguard and Intercontinental champion Razor Ramon





Diesel and Ramon were heated rivals during the summer 1994 and clashed in some violent steel cage matches. Both are rugged brawlers who could become an unstoppable force if they put aside their hatred and joined forces.

By Chris Bernucca

THE RING SKILLS of Shawn Michaels are exceeded only by his vanity. The "Heartbreak Kid" used to have a mirror brought to the ring so he could admire himself prior to matches. He is so fond of his body that he actually hired somebody to look after it for him.

However, it may not be long before Michaels will have to do that himself. And instead of looking in the mirror, he may be looking over his shoulder.

The word is that the relationship between Michaels and Diesel is deteriorating to the point where

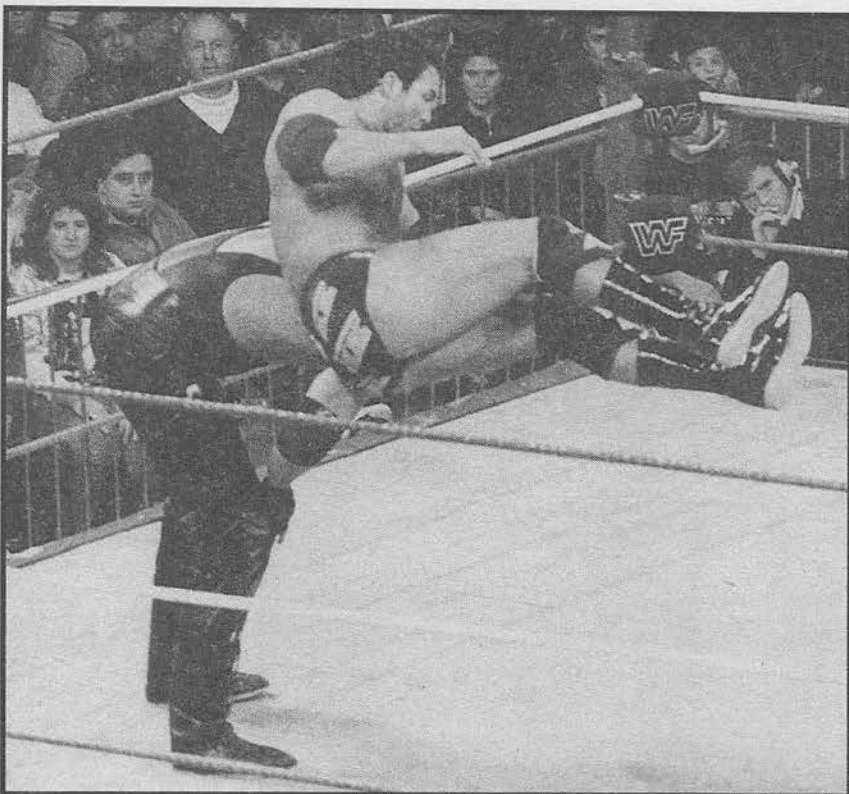
both men hate each other. They don't even like being in the same room together. Michaels resents all the attention Diesel is getting for being one of the toughest men in the WWF, while Diesel is tired of playing second banana to the preening Michaels. And don't be surprised if this one ends up being settled in the squared circle, with Razor Ramon on the side of Diesel.

"There's not much left," said one WWF rulebreaker who requested anonymity. "Shawn and Diesel are on the outs and have been ever since the screw-up at SummerSlam. I'm telling you, this

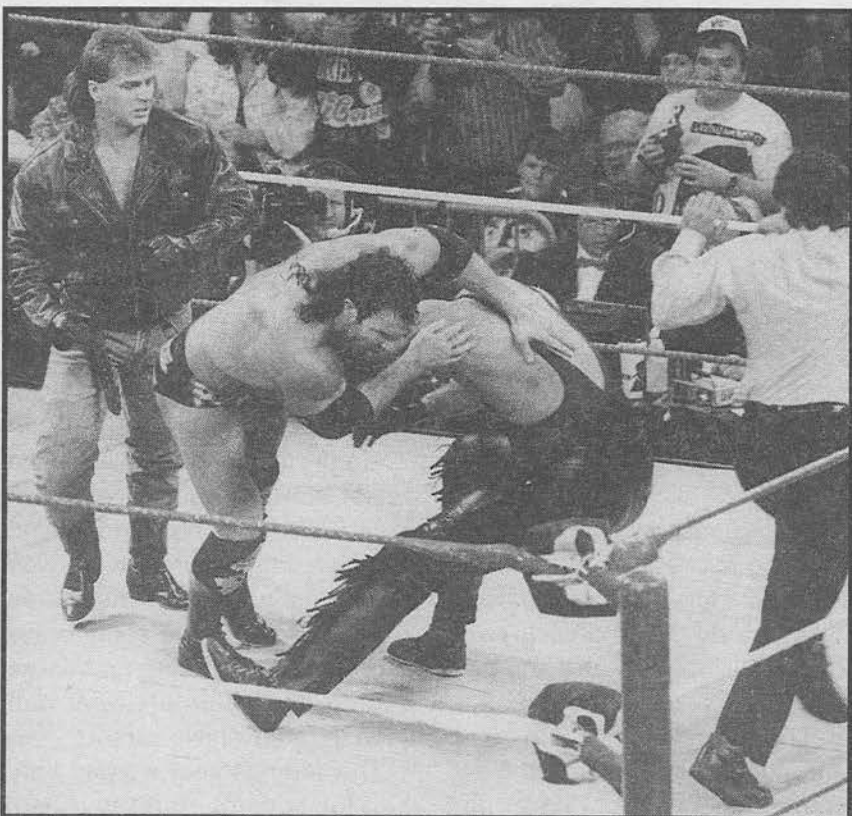
one is ready to explode."

Michaels hired Diesel as his bodyguard in the spring of 1993. Initially, Diesel was only there to fend off attacks on Michaels and assist him at ringside, which of course meant timely interference. Michaels made sure Diesel was handsomely paid for his duties and he also imparted some of his ring wisdom to the big man in an attempt to jump-start what had been a disappointing career.

The arrangement worked very well for several months. Diesel watched Michaels' back while picking up pointers from one of the best scientific grapplers in the



Ramon attempts a flying bulldog headlock on Diesel. Michaels had enough trouble beating Ramon with Diesel in his corner to offer assistance. Imagine the problems he'd have if both these brawlers were after him at the same time.



Though Michaels didn't wrestle much this summer, he did interfere on Diesel's behalf plenty of times. It was Michaels' poorly timed interference at SummerSlam that caused Diesel to lose the Intercontinental title ... and created the rift between him and Diesel.

sport. At WrestleMania X in March, Michaels lost a ladder match for the Intercontinental title to Ramon. Shortly after that, Diesel began putting the bug in Michaels' ear about wanting to go after the I-C belt himself.

Diesel learned a lot from Michaels. He went right after Ramon and won the title less than a month after WrestleMania. For every opponent he jammed into the mat with his jackknife power bomb, his confidence grew. He started wanting more than the I-C belt. He wanted the World title. He wanted to hear Bret Hart scream in agony as he drove him to the canvas with a jackknife.

He got his World title shot at King of the Ring in June, where he did power-bomb the "Hitman." If not for Jim Neidhart's interference, he might have won the World title. He had to settle for a win by disqualification.

By the time August rolled around, Diesel was ready to defend the I-C belt against Ramon at SummerSlam. One night before the pay-per-view, he added another championship to his resume when he teamed with Michaels to win the WWF World tag team title from The Headshrinkers. Both he and Michaels remained confident that Diesel could successfully defend the belt against Ramon if they worked together. However, their plan backfired when Michaels timed his interference incorrectly, clobbering Diesel with a savate kick instead of Ramon. The "Bad Guy" left the ring with the belt around his waist.

"There was a lot of shouting and screaming that night," said an arena employee. "They went into the locker room and let each other have it. I don't think any punches were thrown, but there was something bad between them."

Diesel has confided to friends that he thought he could beat Ramon without any help from Michaels, whom he believed was again trying to upstage him. When that "help" ended up costing him the match, he was livid. The two remain partners, but the one-time bodyguard is definitely looking for a way out.

A source revealed that Diesel wants to get even for what he interprets as sabotage by Michaels. He plans to become a fan favorite and form a tag team with Ramon, with both big men looking to make Michaels' life miserable.

"I've heard rumors to that effect," said the source, a veteran WWF rulebreaker. "It wouldn't surprise me if it happened. Diesel and Ramon would be an awesome tag team: two huge brawlers who aren't afraid of anybody. And Diesel could help Ramon keep the I-C title the same way he helped Michaels."

Diesel is hoping that the mutual hatred he and Ramon hold for Michaels will help erase any bad blood between them. After all, Diesel showed Ramon little respect when they were enemies and may feel that Diesel is just positioning himself closer for a title ambush.

Then again, Ramon was one of the most hated men in the WWF as late as the summer of 1993 and he knows what it's like to have a change of heart.

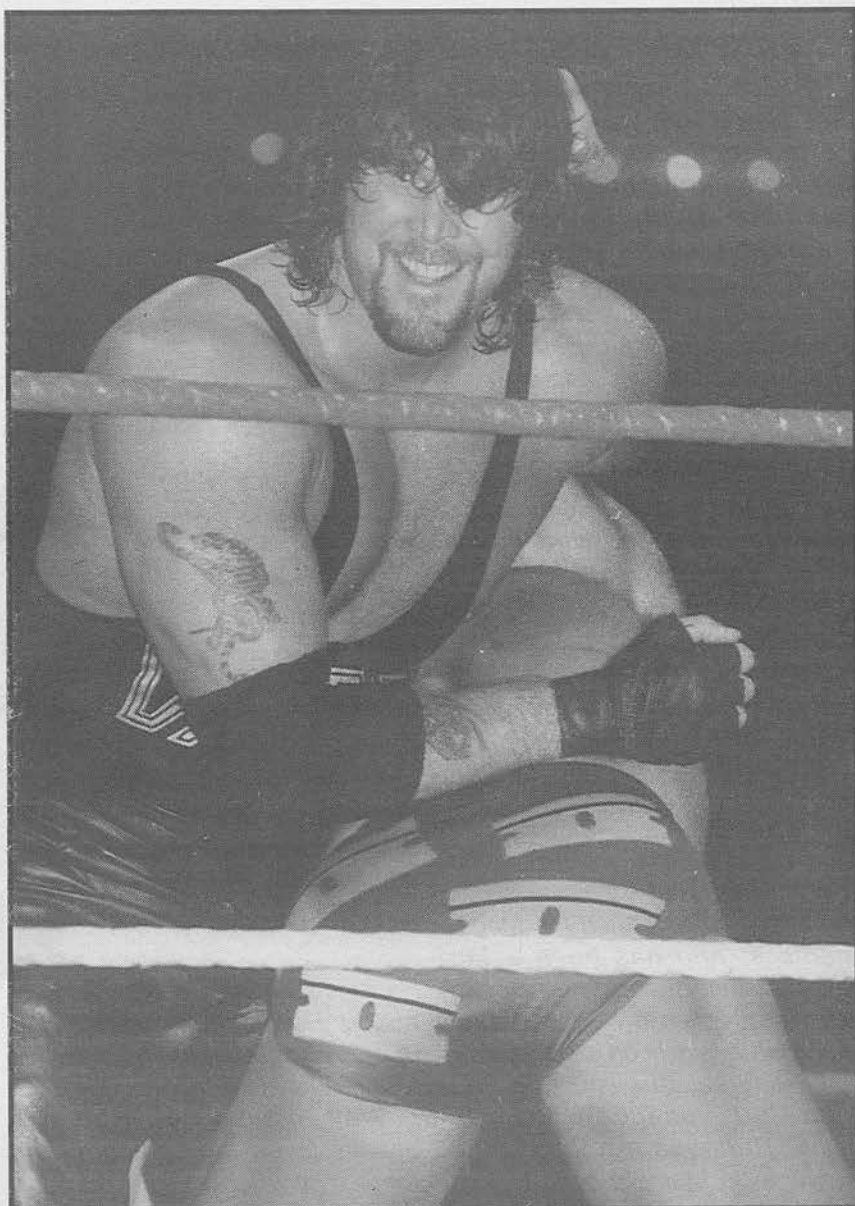
As a tag team, Diesel and Ramon would be quite a force in a division that is very weak. Diesel is the tallest wrestler in the federation, while Ramon is 6'8". Their combined weight is 643 pounds and both have demonstrated improved ring skills over the past year, although not on par with Michaels. Diesel's number-one

priority is getting a piece of his former employer and the "Heartbreak Kid" would have a difficult time defending himself if Ramon were there to get his licks in, too.

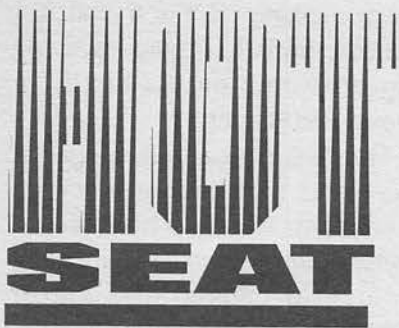
Michaels is said to know nothing of Diesel's defection and had no comment when asked about his relationship with his tag team partner. Michaels likes having someone to watch his back, but that doesn't mean he lacks confidence. Confidence allowed him to turn his back on tag team partner

Marty Jannetty. But at 6' and 234 pounds, Michaels could have two big problems on his hands in Diesel and Ramon.

How will Michaels fare against two giants who would like nothing more than to leave his face so battered that he would never want to look at himself in a mirror again? That remains to be seen. One thing is for sure. Once Diesel leaves, you can bet Michaels will need another bodyguard very soon. □



Diesel used to get a lot of satisfaction out of hurting Ramon. According to insiders, nothing would delight him more now than humiliating Michaels. He'd even be willing to join the "Bad Guy" in the fan favorites' locker room to do so.



JIMMY HART

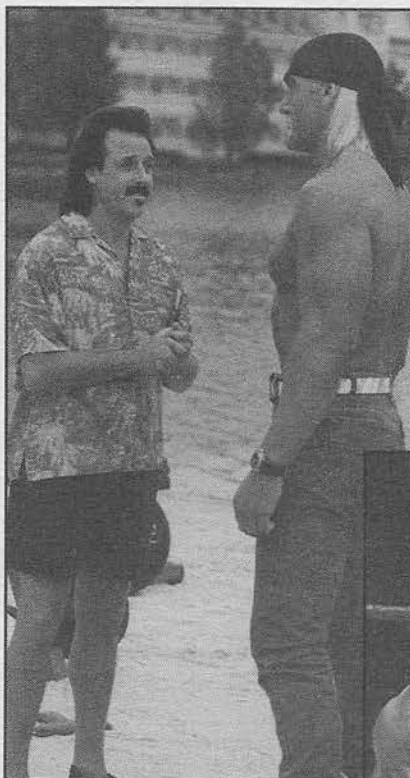
“STOP BRINGING UP MY PAST-PLEASE!”

JIMMY HART Desperately wishes people would take him at face value. But since he joined forces with Brutus Beefcake and Hulk Hogan in February 1993, forming the Megamaniacs, the “Mouth of the South” has been suspected of having ulterior motives. There’s a good reason for that: Hart is one of the most despised rulebreaking managers in wrestling.

Hulk Hogan knows, for he was WWF World champion when Hart was doing his dirtiest dirty work. Hart managed The Hart Foundation, The Honky Tonk Man, Ted DiBiase, Irwin R. Schyster, and Paul Orndorff, and at one time commented, “My life will be complete when one of my men runs Hogan out of wrestling.”

It never happened. In fact, Hart helped run Hogan back *into* wrestling after Brutus Beefcake was attacked by DiBiase and IRS during a WWF card. Hart attempted to halt the attack, later formed the Megamaniacs, and has been a fan favorite since then. When Hogan returned to action in WCW last summer, Hart was right on his coattails.

Of course, this isn’t the first time Hart managed Hogan. In 1980, Hart was a rulebreaking manager in Memphis and Hogan was his protege in a feud against Jerry Lawler. Now they’re both on the side of good, but people are

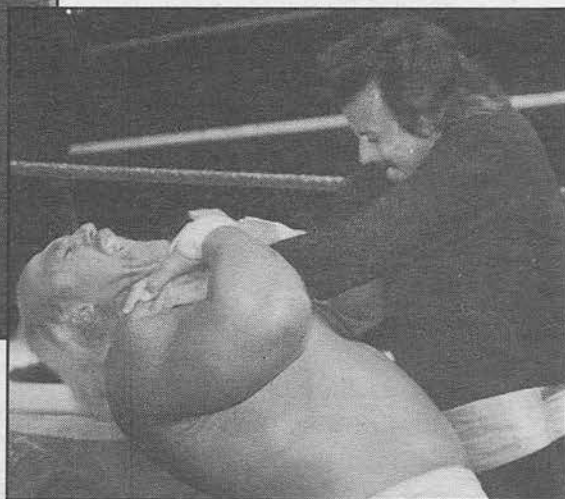


Jimmy Hart and Hulk Hogan are now close friends (above), but only a few years ago they were fierce rivals (right).

trating—to be with Hogan than against him.

It’s more profitable, too. For the first time in his career, Hart’s backing an indisputable winner. And that’s more than he can say about The Honky Tonk Man, who recently return to action in WCW.

The Hogan-Hart alliance seems solid. Both men are committed to making it work, yet the questions keep arising. Senior Writer Dave Rosenbaum posed those ques-

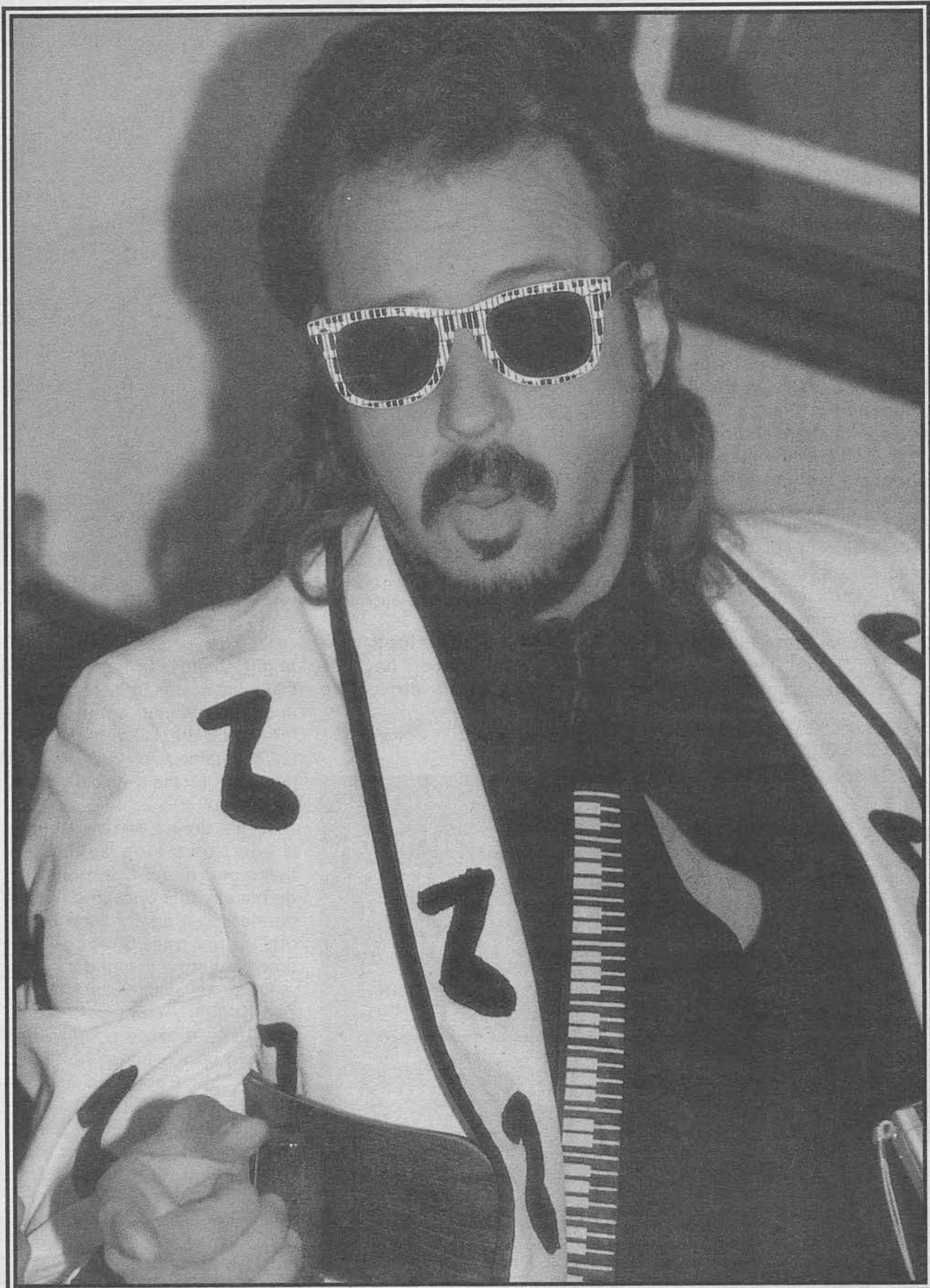


asking: How long can it last? Hart is certain to eventually show his true colors...isn’t he?

Well, maybe not. Hart has always loved the spotlight, and there’s no brighter light than the one that shines on Hogan. Perhaps Hart learned the hard way that it’s better—and less frus-

tions to Hart during a recent interview in Atlanta. “It’s hard to say if Hart’s sincere, because he acts the same way he always has,” he reported. “He talks a mile a minute and sometimes he doesn’t make much sense. I’ll leave it to the fans to judge for themselves.”

Your witness, readers.



Q: Thanks for giving me your time, Jimmy. I know you have a hectic schedule.

A: Hectic, nothing! I always have time for the media. You ask the questions and I'll answer them, straightforward as usual. Jimmy Hart has nothing to hide, and neither does Hulk Hogan.

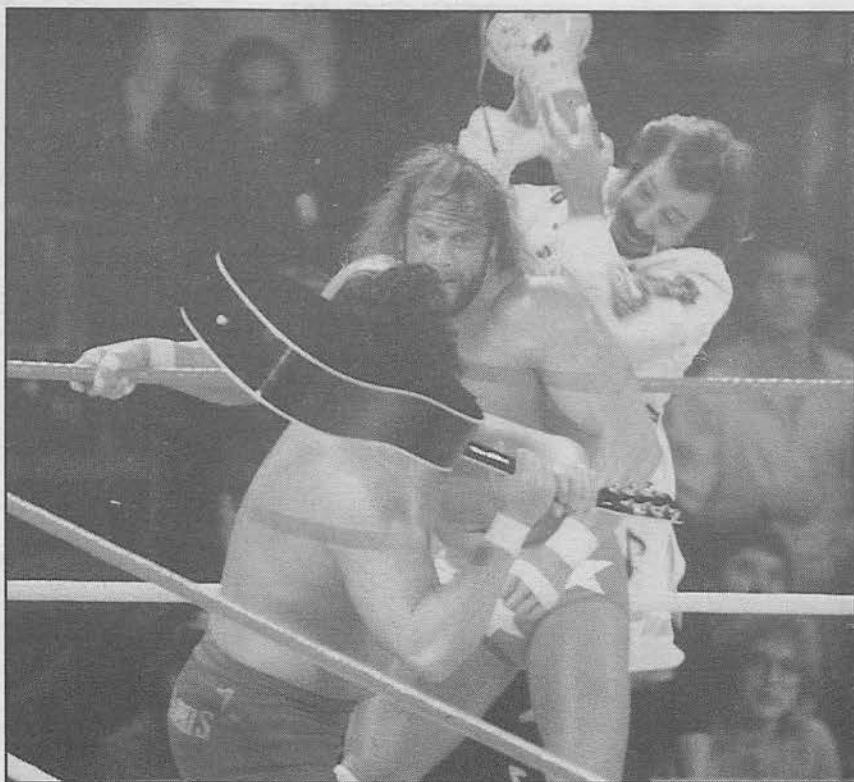
Q: Except your past.

A: What the heck does that mean? What're we gonna do here for the next two hours, talk about 1970 and 1960? Why don't we talk about Atilla the Hun while we're at it? I'm not interested in history. I'm interested in the here and now.

Q: I understand that, but a lot of people are interested in your recent history.

A: My recent history has me on the side of Hogan and Beefcake. Check your notes, reporter!

Q: I know what you're talking about. But even in that WWF feud, a lot of people thought you sided with Hogan and Beefcake only to get revenge against DiBiase and IRS.



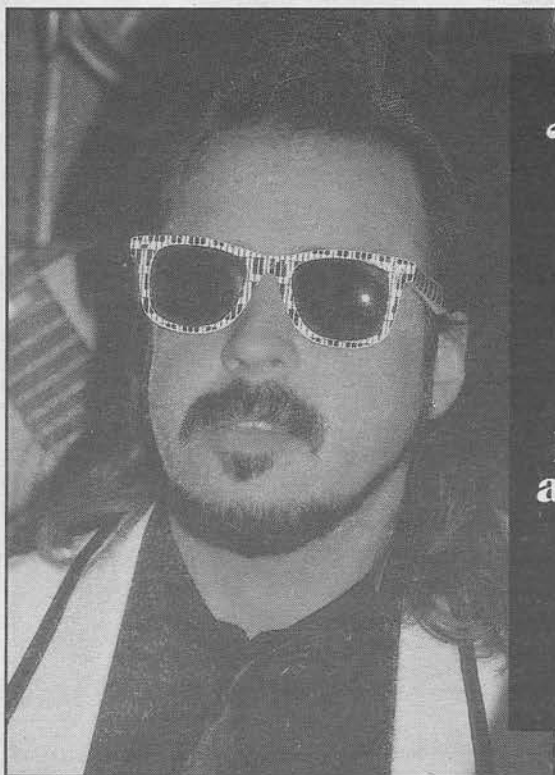
Hart managed Honky Tonk Man in the WWF in 1988. Now that Honky Tonk is also in WCW, Hart maintains their association is buried in the past.

A: Nonsense! I sided with Hulk and "The Barber" because it was the right side. I've changed my colors.

Q: Your colors are still pretty bright, Jimmy. In fact, the only thing that seems to have changed about you is your apparent attitude. You dress the same. You talk the same. Only you don't *act* the same. By the way, did you say two hours?

A: It's gonna be two minutes if you don't stop asking me these scurrilous questions. I'm gonna say this once and I'm not gonna say it again: Stop bringing up my past. Please. Next time I'm gonna demand it.

Q: C'mon, Jimmy. Let's face it: Ted Kennedy can't get elected President because people keep bringing up the things he did 25 years ago. People in Massachusetts tell me he's a great senator, but he couldn't get elected national dog catcher. And how about President Clinton? Tell Paula Jones to stop bringing up his past. I think these are legitimate questions, Jimmy. You were a rule-breaker for far longer than you've been a favorite. The past is not



"I've always admired Hulk. You tell me, who's in a better position to appreciate a man than his worst enemy?"

yet history, Jimmy.

A: Fine. Then I'll let you ask me one question about my past. Just one.

Q: Fair enough. Okay. How do you explain that you've changed your attitude so thoroughly and suddenly that can people trust you?

A: That's two questions, Rosenbaum. Two. But I'll answer them both. First of all, I changed because I saw what was going on. I got introspective in my old age and realized that what DiBiase and IRS did wasn't right. Besides, I've always admired Hulk. You tell me, who's in a better position to appreciate a man than his worst enemy? I began to recognize his strengths, not only physically, but his strength of character. Then I said to myself, "Jimmy, it's time to stop beating your head against the wall. You're on the wrong side." It was as simple as that. And that should answer your second question. You'd better believe people can trust me, but more importantly, Hulk Hogan can trust me. And if you don't believe that, just ask yourself this one question: Even if I was the most evil man in the world, would I rather be on the side that wins and rakes in millions of dollars, or the side that loses all the time and makes a lot less? Common sense tells you that Hulk Hogan's side is the one to be on. It's as simple as that.

Q: Makes a lot of sense. But now The Honky Tonk Man is in WCW, and there's a rumor going around that you brought him back.

A: That's totally untrue and completely unfounded, Rosenbaum, I think this is just another cheap way of bringing up my past and I'm not going to fall for it. I have nothing to do with The Honky Tonk Man anymore. I made him what he was, but he's

nothing anymore, and he's never gonna be, because I'm on the other side now.

Q: You sound very convincing, but maybe there's a reason for that. Has Ric Flair ever asked you to be on his side?

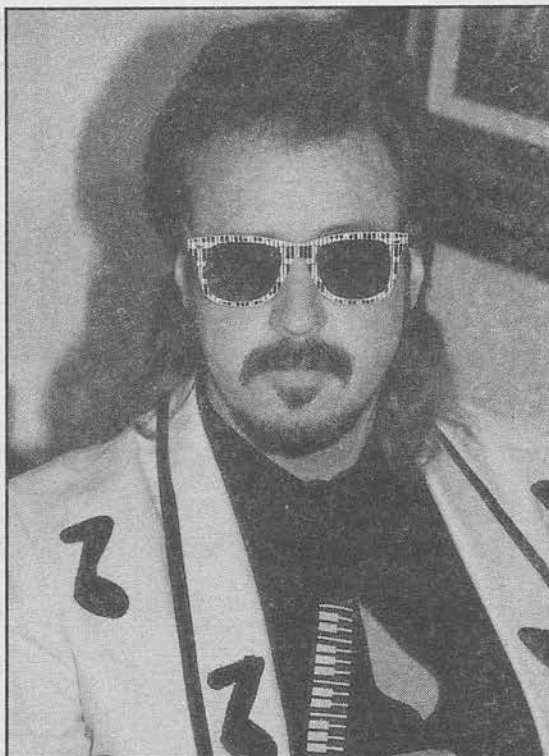
A: No, but what's that got to do with it? I have no interest in Flair. He's not my friend. He's never been my friend.

Q: Hmmmm. How about Big Van Vader? No. He has a manager. I guess when you get right down to it, all the prime rulebreaker manager spots are nailed down in WCW. Hogan was the right move.

A: It has nothing to do with what's the right move, it has to do with who my friends are. Hogan and Beefcake. Hack-saw Duggan. I never realized what a great wrestler Duggan is until he came to WCW. Now he's taking on the whole world. You know, Rosenbaum, instead of grilling me, you should be asking Nick Bockwinkel why a ban in the United States doesn't count in Europe instead of bringing up old subjects with me. Bockwinkel's the one I want to know about.

Q: How about Flair? You know Hogan's strengths and weaknesses. How much longer can he hold off Flair's assault?

A: For as long as he wants to. If and when Hulk loses the WCW World title, you'll know he wasn't interested in holding it anymore. There's nothing in the

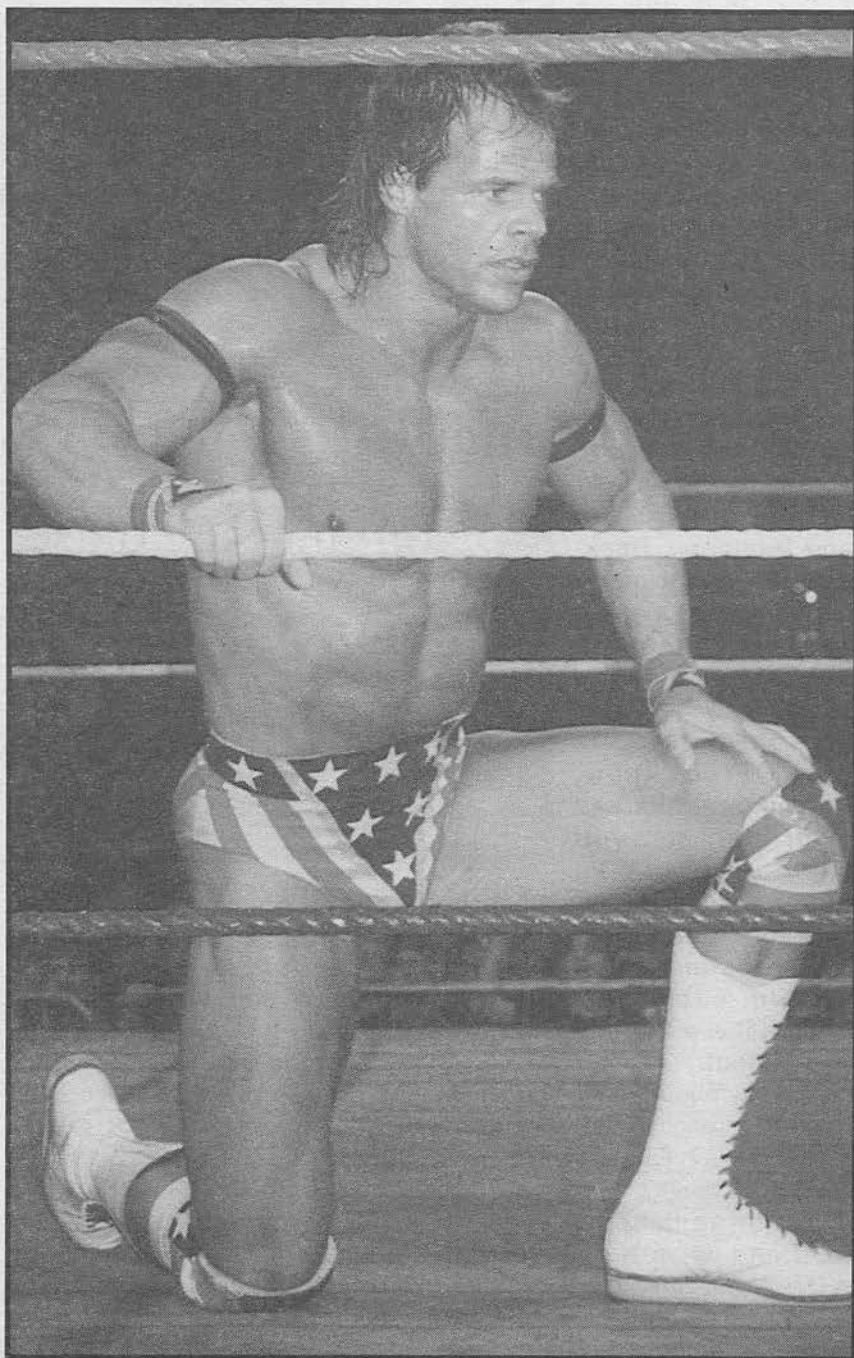


"Even if I was the most evil man in the world, would I rather be on the side that wins and rakes in millions of dollars, or the side that loses all the time and makes a lot less?"

world Ric Flair can do to beat Hulk Hogan when the "Hulkster's" at full strength. Like you said, I've learned that the hard way. And I'm going to be right by his side whenever he needs me. You know, Dave, I've been on the wrong side for a long time in my life. Now it's time to do the right thing. That's why I wish you people would stop questioning me. A man can change, and I've changed. Just remember that, and stop doubting me. □

POWER FAILURE!

The *Real*
Reason Lex
Luger
Short-
Circuited



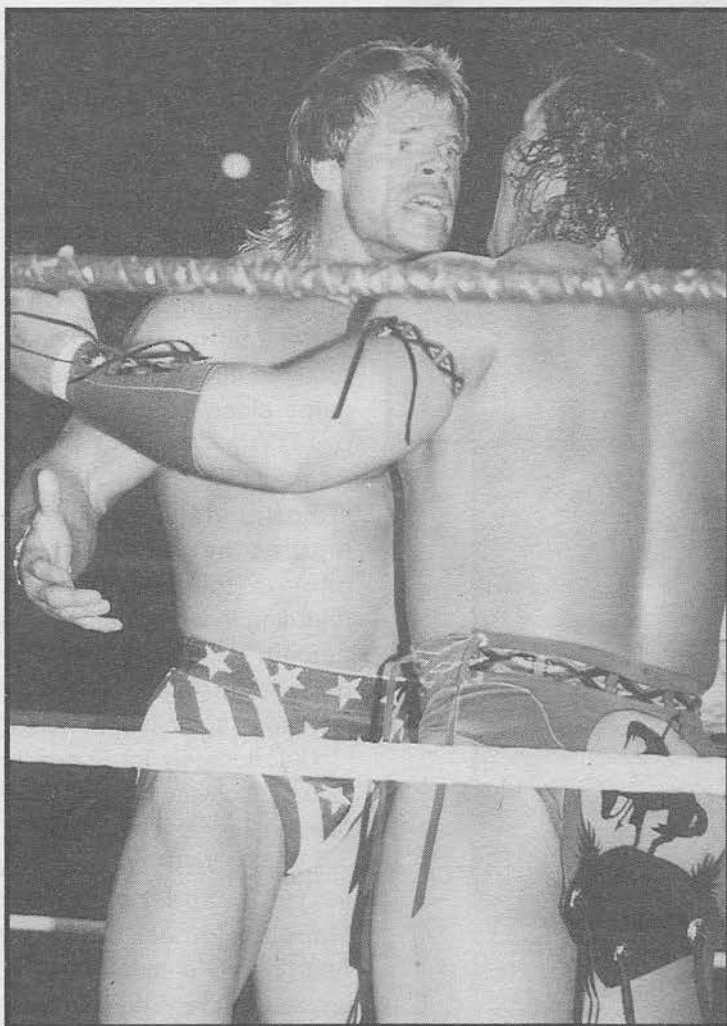
Lex Luger loves wrestling, but is absolutely *passionate* about bodybuilding. He was all set to compete in that sport several years ago until an accident got in the way. Believe it or not: His anger over what happened is *still* affecting his wrestling!

By V.J. Paterno

WHAT MIGHT HAVE been. For many, they are the four saddest words in the English language.

If Scott Norwood's field goal attempt had gone through, making the Buffalo Bills Super Bowl

POWER FAILURE!



The look on Lex Luger's face after his friend Tatanka turned against him at SummerSlam showed just how frustrated he was, but it is nothing compared to the frustration he's been feeling since his bodybuilding career abruptly ended.

POWER FAILURE!

POWER FAILURE!

champions in their first trip to the big dance ... if the New York Mets had decided not to trade a young fireballer named Nolan Ryan ... if the Edmonton Oilers had been able to retain Wayne Gretzky and the rest of the team that dominated the NHL in the mid-1980s.

"What might have been" also rings true for Lex Luger. Not so much for his wrestling career, but for what he could have done on the bodybuilding circuit.

"Don't get me wrong, Lex has accomplished quite a bit as a wrestler, and he's happy with that," a friend of Luger's said. "He's won the World title in WCW, is a WWF contender, and is financially comfortable. But it definitely hurts him that he's never been able to follow through with that bodybuilding career. With his physique, I don't blame him."

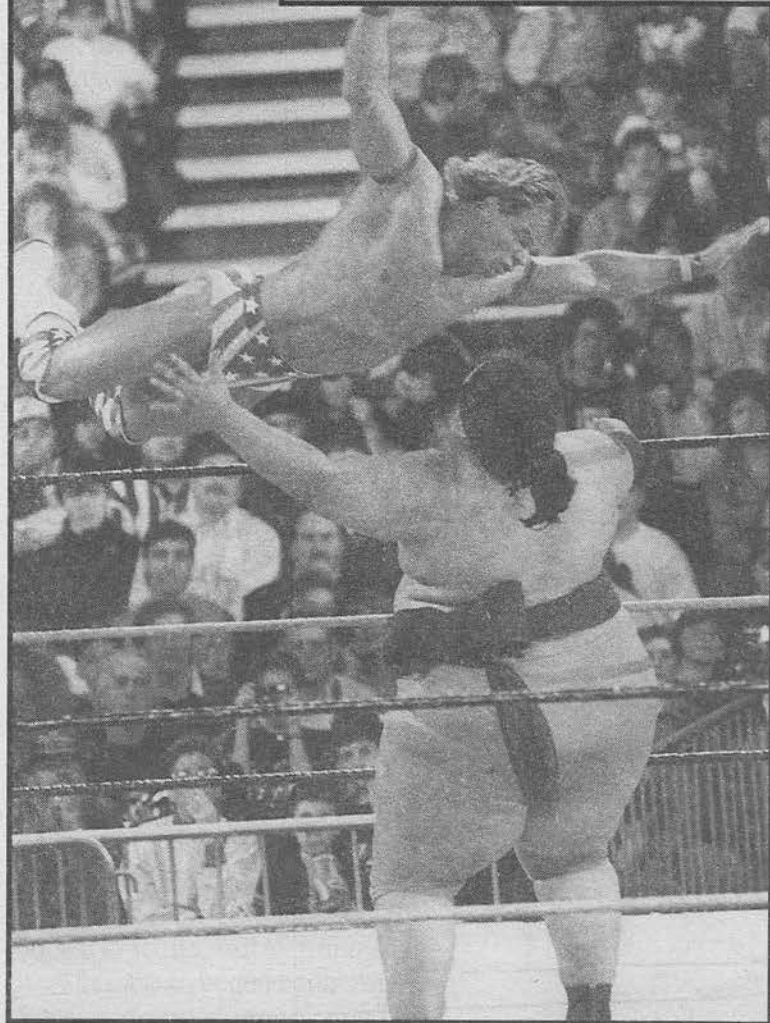
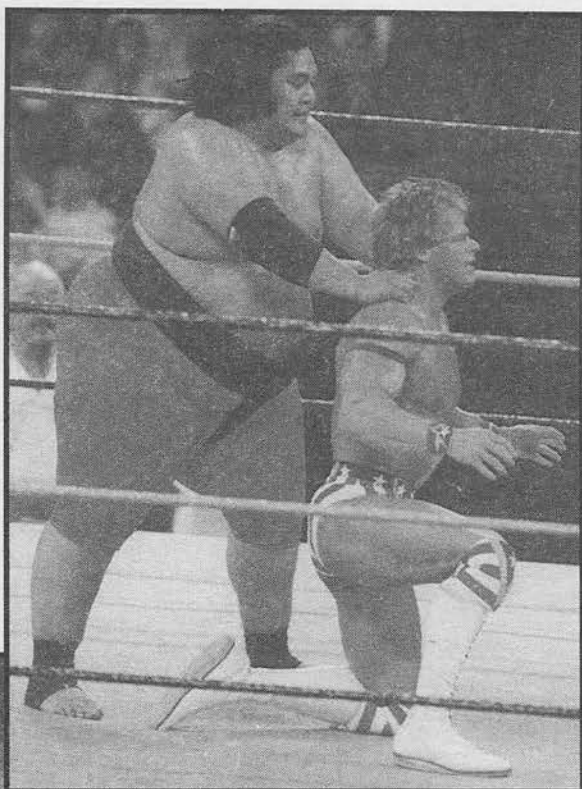
For Luger, what makes "what might have been" especially galling is that it was fate that did him in, not his own judgment.

Just days after losing the WCW World title to Sting on February 29, 1992, Luger shocked the wrestling world by announcing he was leaving the federation. "It's time for me to take a breather," he commented. He soon signed with Vince McMahon—but not the WWF. Instead, he joined McMahon's fledgling World Bodybuilding Federation.

"It made sense for Lex," the friend commented. "He's owned or co-owned several gymnasiums over the years. He figured that it was right up his alley. In fact, he seemed to have more enthusiasm for bodybuilding than he did for wrestling. After all, there's no interference in bodybuilding."

Luger announced on a WWF

Luger received title shots against then-WWF World champ Yokozuna at both SummerSlam '93 and WrestleMania and dominated both matches—but his own poor judgment cost him the title both times. Would that have happened if he were totally focused on wrestling?



telecast that he would appear on the April 4, 1992, debut of *WBF Body Stars*. While getting himself in shape for the rigors of the WBF, he was to guest-pose in the federation's next pay-per-view competition, set for June 13 in Long Beach, California. Eventually he would compete in the WBF, perhaps contend for a title.

He never got that chance.

On June 8, five days before he was to appear in Long Beach, Luger was riding his motorcycle in Atlanta when he lost control and was hit by an oncoming car. Thrown from the cycle, he suffered torn knee ligaments, a crushed right elbow, and torn abdominal muscles. The elbow required three operations, and he came close to losing use of his right arm. A metal plate was inserted there.

Fortunately for Luger, the injuries he received weren't enough to prevent him from returning to wrestling once he had healed. (Ironically, he regularly uses the metal-plated forearm as a weapon against opponents.)

Unfortunately for Luger, by the time he recovered, the World Bodybuilding Federation had folded.

Luger's WBF contract expired in 1993, and he joined McMahon's "other" organization. After initially competing as a rule-breaker in the WWF, he achieved national recognition that summer with his "Call To Action" campaign. He traveled across the United States on a bus to greet fans, but settled for a victory by countout over WWF World champion Yokozuna at SummerSlam. A win, but no title.

"The WWF World title means a lot to him, as it would to any wrestler," his friend noted. "But sometimes he still talks about the WBF, he still wonders what might

have happened if that motorcycle accident hadn't occurred. Lex would've been a super bodybuilder, I have no doubt of that."

Noted wrestling psychologist Dr. Sidney M. Basil said that Luger's frustration is perfectly natural—and may be affecting his wrestling career.

"After looking forward to bodybuilding, it was suddenly taken away from him. When you have regrets like that, it's bound to play havoc with your psyche. It's human nature at work. You may be able to achieve quite a bit, but something is always gnawing at you.

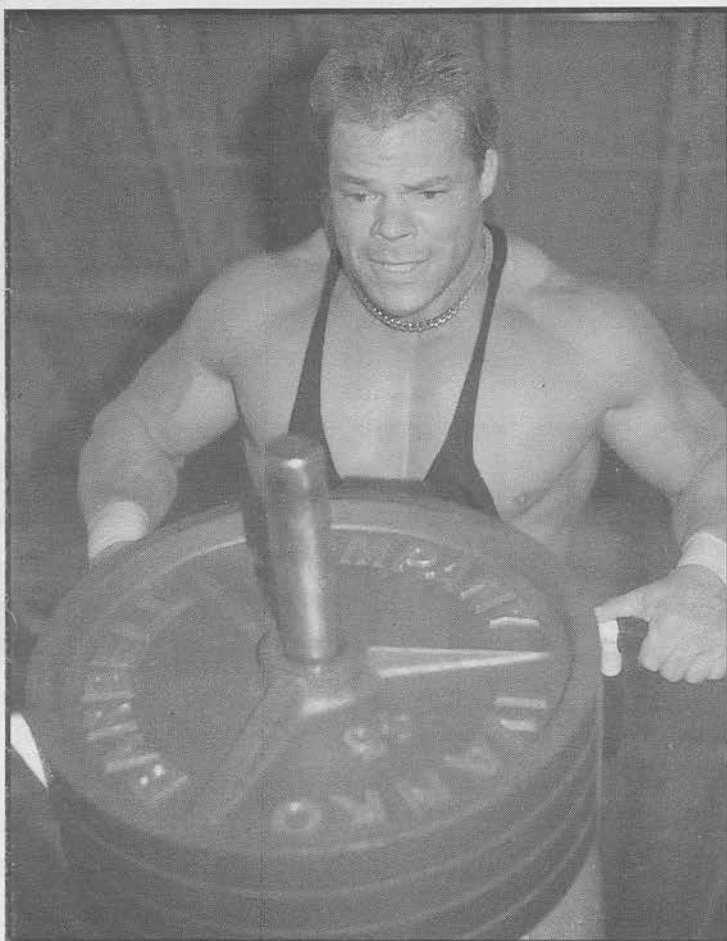
"If I were Lex, I'd get some therapy and try to put this disappointment on the shelf for good. I think it would make Luger a better wrestler. Good enough for a WWF World title? I don't know. That depends on whom he's facing and so many other factors. But I will say that therapy would significantly boost his chances of getting a title belt."

According to Basil, Luger's mental state may have hindered him at WrestleMania X, where he snapped at and shoved special referee Curt Hennig, thereby losing to Yokozuna by disqualification.

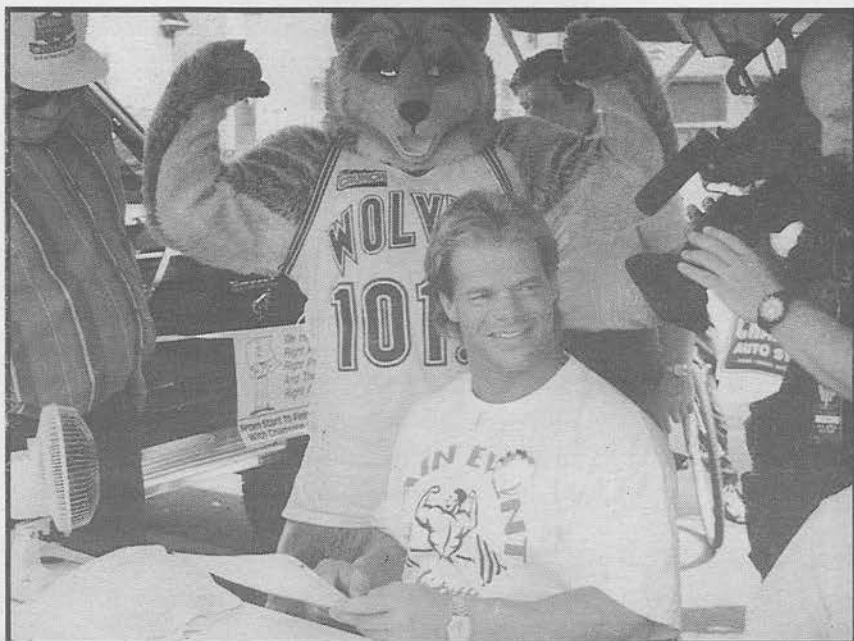
"He seemed angry at himself. Being deprived of a chance to be a bodybuilder has given him an apparent masochistic streak," Basil said. "It is not good for *any* wrestler to be his own worst enemy."

Luger the bodybuilder is no more. Luger the wrestler still has many years left in him. It's up to the wrestler in Lex to prevent the frustrated bodybuilder from weakening the rest of his career.

Or else the wrestler may also be wondering about what might have been. □



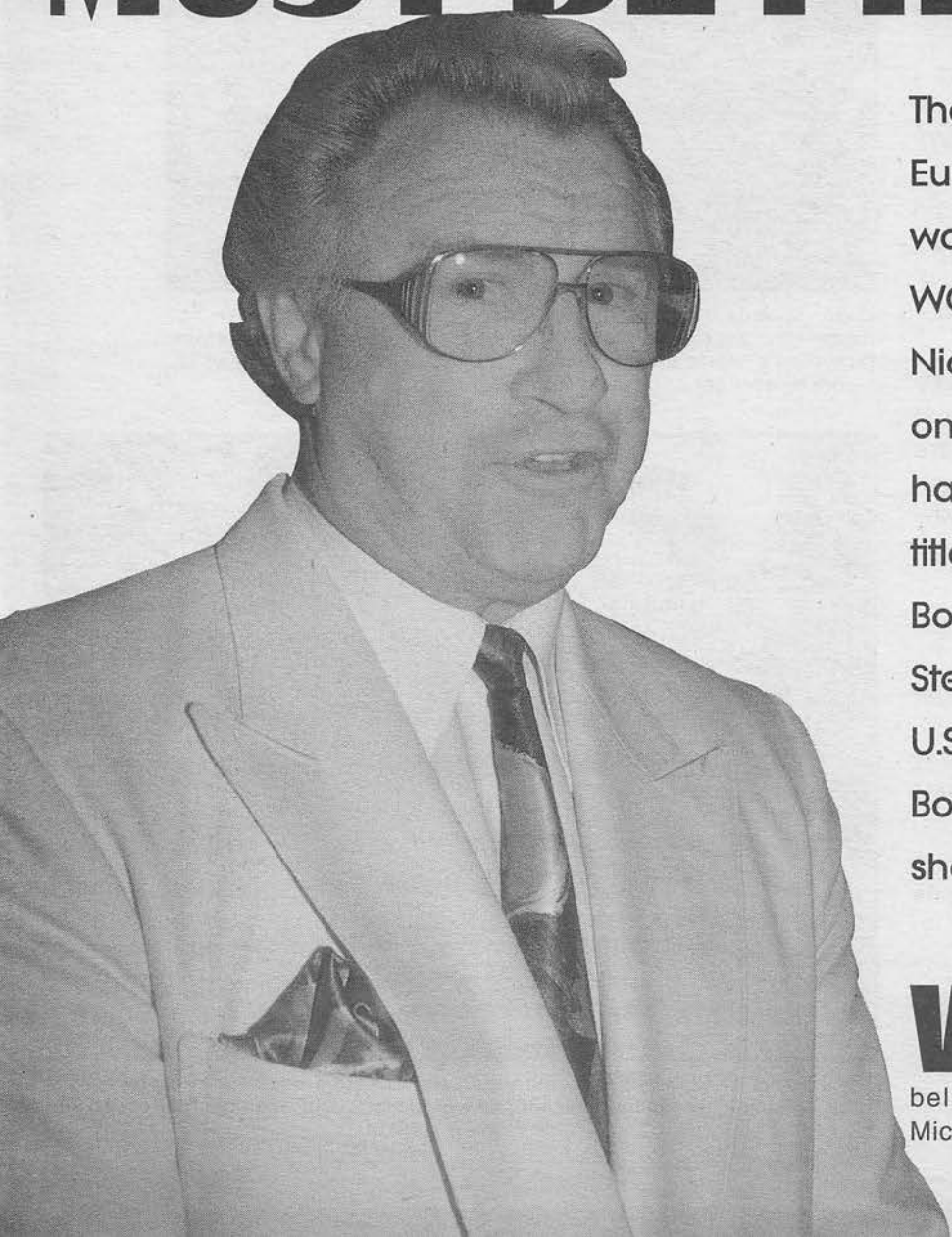
Luger spends countless hours in the gym trying to improve his impressive physique. Back in 1992, he left WCW and joined Vince McMahon's World Bodybuilding Federation—but it folded in 1993, before he ever got a chance to compete.



The summer of 1993 was busy for Luger: He traveled cross-country by bus in his "Call To Action" campaign and met many of his fans. But when the tour ended and the fanfare died down, he still didn't have a WWF title.

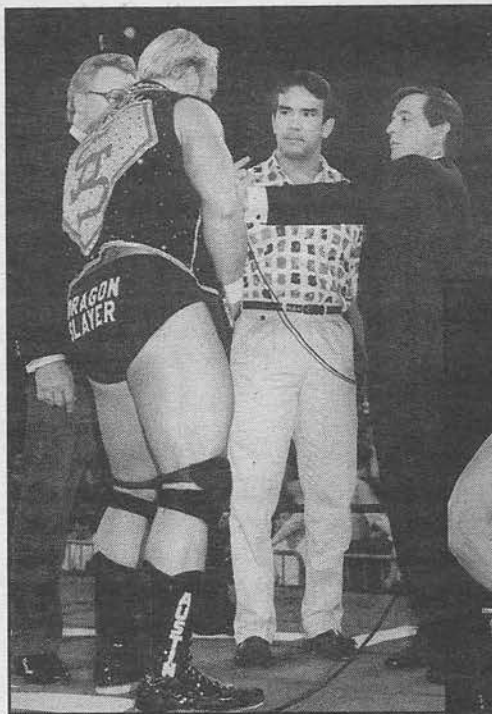
The Steamboat-Austin-Duggan Debacle:

NICK BOCKWINKEL MUST BE FIRED!

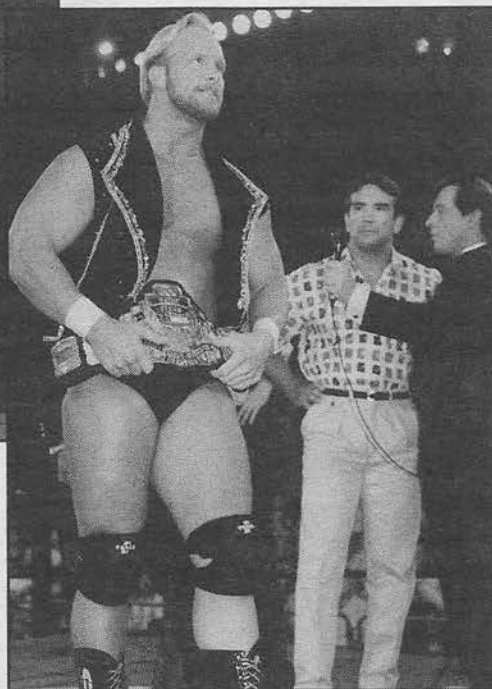


The Flair-Martel-Europe controversy was bad enough. WCW Commissioner Nick Bockwinkel struck once again with his handling of the U.S. title controversy. Bockwinkel shoved Steve Austin out of the U.S. title picture and Bockwinkel should be shoved out of WCW

WAYNE GRETZKY RUNS the Los Angeles Kings. Everyone in hockey believes that's true, just like Michael Jordan supposedly ran



Unable to compete due to a severe back injury, Rick Steamboat is forced by WCW Commissioner Nick Bockwinkel to relinquish the U.S. title to his scheduled challenger, Steve Austin.



the Chicago Bulls in basketball. It might seem to most people that Commissioner Nick Bockwinkel runs WCW, but that's not the impression insiders are getting these days.

"Bockwinkel's a pawn," said a WCW wrestler whose name, for good reason, won't be printed here. "You just think about if for a second. Who's worth more to

WCW, Bockwinkel or Hulk Hogan? It's no contest, right? That's why everything that's going on these days revolves around

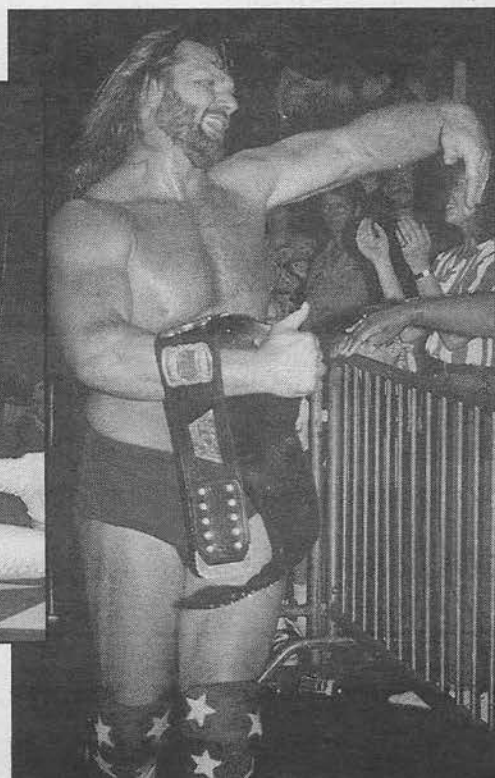
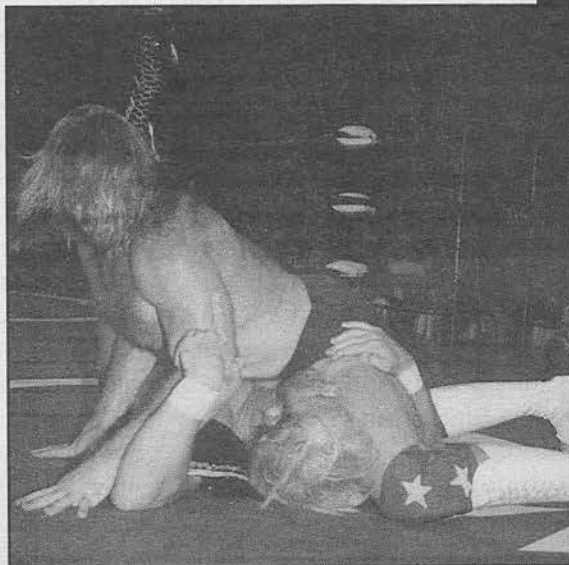
Hogan. Everything. Bockwinkel's a nothing."

In many ways, it doesn't matter if this anonymous wrestler is right in vilifying Bockwinkel. Image means a lot in professional sports, and the image being projected these days by the WCW commissioner is bad for the federation and bad for the sport. It's easy to see why a wrestler might think Hulk Hogan is running WCW. Good things keep happening to Hogan's friends.

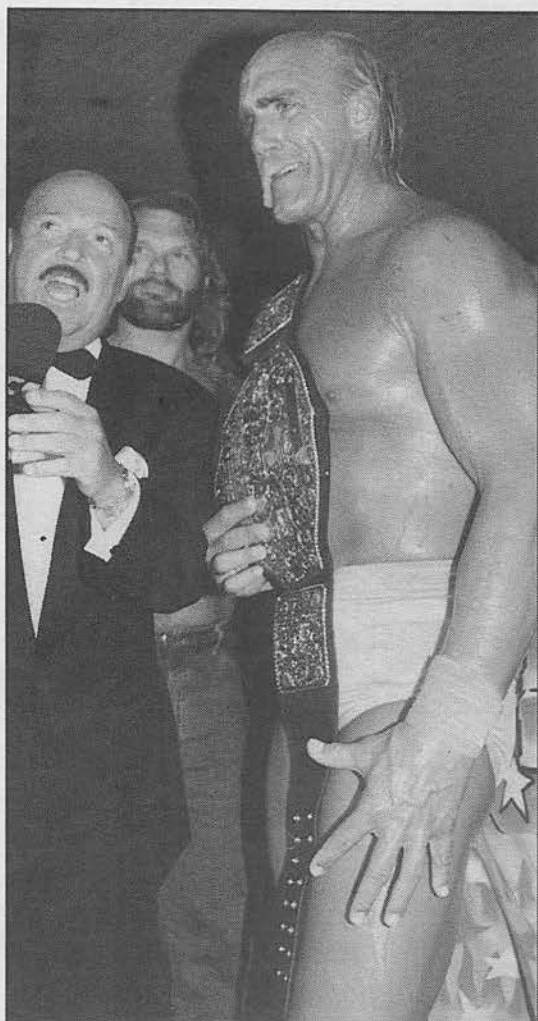
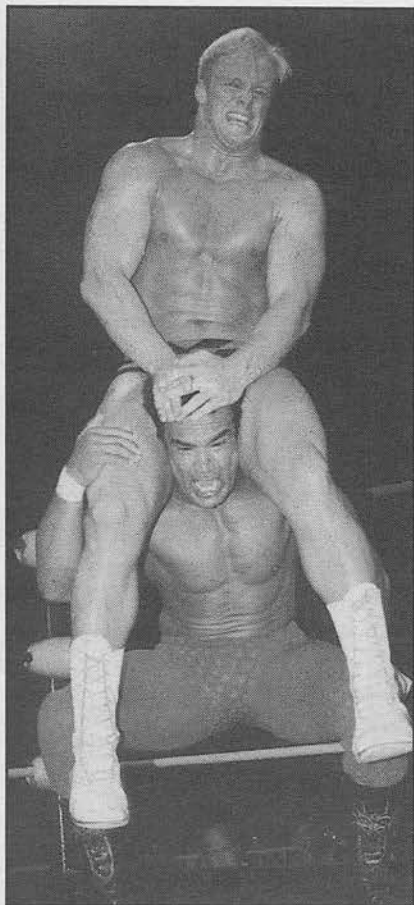
Take the recent debacle at Fall Brawl '94 during which Bockwinkel stripped Rick Steamboat of the U.S.

title, handed the belt to former champion Steve Austin, and ordered an impromptu match between Austin and Hacksaw

Against the new champion's wishes, Bockwinkel immediately ordered Austin to defend the belt against a Hacksaw Duggan. The result was a 27-second pin and new champion.



As suggestion to Bockwinkel: Once Steamboat is healthy, make a match between he and Austin, with the winner guaranteed a shot at Duggan.



It is widely believed that Hulk Hogan wields the same power in WCW as some megastars do in team sports. Note the man standing in the background as broadcaster Gene Okerlund interviews Hogan after his title win over Ric Flair: That's Hacksaw Duggan.

if the Yankees didn't show up."

Bockwinkel's actions at Fall Brawl '94 didn't make sense on several counts:

1. How come everybody except Austin was aware of Steamboat's injury? According to WCW sources, Steamboat told Bockwinkel about his injury at least two hours before the card started. One hour later, Bockwinkel informed Steamboat that he would be stripped of

Duggan. Why Duggan? Only Bockwinkel knows. Duggan was 10th in the WCW ratings printed in the issue of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated Weekly* published the week prior to Fall Brawl.

Sting, Johnny B. Badd, Lord Steven Regal, and Kevin Sullivan, were all rated ahead of Duggan and available to wrestle because they weren't on the card.

"But Duggan was the only one who was ready to wrestle," Bockwinkel said. "Besides, he's proven himself to be a top-rate competitor worthy of the U.S. title."

Top-rate? Where? In the WWF, that's where, but not recently in WCW. And since when does carrying a wrestling outfit in a gym bag qualify a wrestler for shots at a major title? Since Bockwinkel

became commissioner, that's when. Duggan's main asset seemed to be that he is friends with Hogan.

For this action—as well as several other inexcusable decisions—we call for the WCW Board of Directors and owner Ted Turner to fire Bockwinkel. His crime: making WWF President Jack Tunney look good.

"Heck, Tunney's like Kenisaw Mountain Landis compared to Bockwinkel," said another WCW wrestler who requested anonymity. "Banning Flair and Sherri in the United States but not in Europe was bad enough. This was absolutely ridiculous. Duggan no more deserved a shot at the title than the Milwaukee Brewers would deserve to play in the World Series

the title if he couldn't wrestle. Steamboat briefly protested before reportedly telling Bockwinkel, "Then I have no choice. My back hurts too much. It's not worth risking my health to defend the belt." At that point, Bockwinkel should have informed Austin that Steamboat couldn't wrestle and a replacement would be named.

2. Why Duggan? Why wasn't one of the other higher-rated wrestlers asked to replace Steamboat? And if none of them were available, why didn't Bockwinkel simply cancel the match?

3. Why was Steamboat stripped of the belt when he won it on August 24, well within the 30-day title defense window? Bockwinkel punished Steamboat for being honest; "The Dragon" could have

just started the match and gotten himself counted out in the first 20 seconds.

The Duggan-Austin match lasted only seven seconds longer than that. Duggan pinned Austin in 27 seconds after Bockwinkel prevented Austin from leaving the ring.

"I had a foolproof plan for beating Steamboat, then he can't wrestle because his back hurts?" Austin said. "It didn't say anything in the contract about substitute opponents. That flag-waving idiot Duggan shouldn't have even been in the building! I'll get my lawyers working on this."

Although Austin has a point, his lawyers will have a difficult time getting anything accomplished.

According to the standard WCW wrestlers' contract, Bockwinkel has final say on all disputes regarding match assignments, match decisions, fines, and suspensions. By signing his WCW contract, Austin waived his right to challenge Bockwinkel in a court of law. Bockwinkel is judge and jury.

Bockwinkel's actions were surprising considering he was already under scrutiny for his questionable decision in the Flair/Sherri ban. Although Flair was the main beneficiary of that decision because he got to wrestle Flair in Europe, Hogan also benefited. The "Hulkster" was under contract to wrestle in Europe. If Flair couldn't compete, Bockwinkel had the right to

choose substitute opponents that Hogan might not have been prepared to wrestle.

Bockwinkel again seemed to be catering to Hogan with the U.S. title decision. Hogan and his friends have taken over WCW telecasts and cards. Hogan is everywhere. WCW is quickly turning into the old WWF. That's not a bad thing for WCW officials, who are enjoying record-setting TV ratings, pay-per-view buy rates, and live attendances. No wonder they want to keep Hogan happy.

The price, however, is far too large. The integrity of WCW's championships is at stake. Bockwinkel has put it on the line. Now he must be put out to pasture. □



Bockwinkel's championship reigns in the AWA came under the jurisdiction of Stanley Blackburn, the most criticized and second-guessed federation president in wrestling history. Bockwinkel must act quickly to change the perception of his administrative prowess.

The telephone wires sizzle each month, as two top wrestlers voice their rage and hostility toward each other. Here's the unedited transcript of their conversation, your chance to feel the raw emotion that results when two antagonists face off ... **One On One**

BOTH JOHNNY B. BADD and The Honky Tonk Man are better wrestlers than they are imitators. However, that hasn't stopped either of them from subjecting WCW to two of the most amusing sideshows around.

Trouble is, each man wants to be the only show. That's why they're in the midst of a feud that has nearly everyone paying attention.

Badd, the man who bears a striking resemblance to Little Richard, is riding high these days. He captured the WCW TV title from Lord Steven Regal at Fall Brawl. For Badd, it was not only an important victory, but a huge step toward respectability. He had come very close to taking the World title from Ric Flair and the U.S. belt from Steve Austin in the past year. Having won the TV title, Badd no longer can be dismissed as a flamboyant flash-in-the-pan.

As for Honky Tonk Man, no one thought much of him when he arrived in the WWF in 1986. He was dismissed as a poor Elvis Presley impersonator and little more. However, in 1987 he stunned the wrestling world when he beat Rick Steamboat for the Intercontinental title. He held the belt for more than a year, the proclaiming himself "the greatest Intercontinental champion of all-time."

Recently, he arrived in WCW with no less arrogant a manner. The swagger was back, and he had a new goal: Badd's TV title. He was desperate to prove himself not only a great champion, but the federation's premier musical attraction. He was convinced he could match his WWF success in WCW.

It wasn't difficult to get either

Badd or Honky Tonk to square off verbally. That is their specialty. What follows is a little bit of the world according to Johnny and Honky Tonk ... "One On One."

JOHNNY B. BADD: How you doin', Honky? First off I have to tell you how good it feels to be a champion! I worked hard to get this TV title. You know, I didn't think Stevie Regal would ever give it up. But here it is, around my waist. I intend to enjoy a very long title reign, too.

HONKY TONK MAN: Yeah, you go ahead and enjoy yourself, Badd. You have a real good time now, because soon as I get my mind set to it, The Honky Tonk Man is gonna come along and take that pretty belt of yours. Oh, yeah, I can almost

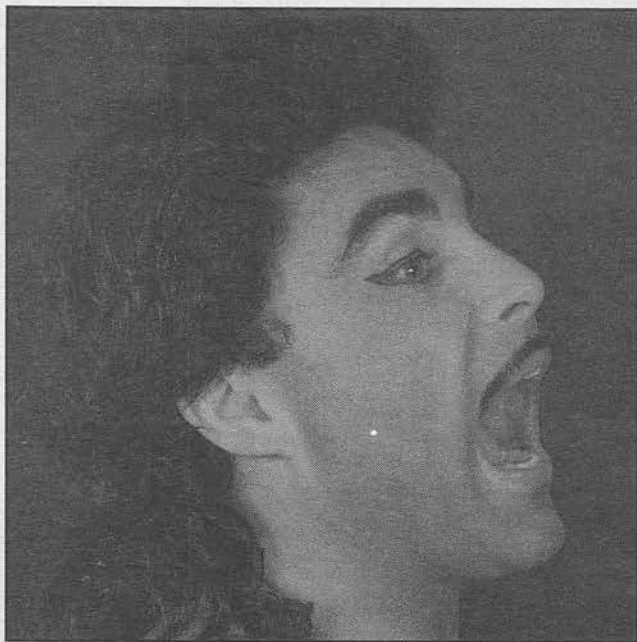
see that smirk on your face. Wipe it off. And you talk about how it feels to be a champion. The Honky Tonk Man knows what it's like to be a champion! I was the greatest champion in the history of that other place and I'm fixing to be the greatest champion in WCW! First, your TV belt, then the U.S. title, then the whole ball of wax: the heavyweight championship of the world! The greatest champion and the finest musician, that's what The Honky Tonk Man is all about!

JBB: Are you quite finished?

HTM: Go ahead; I ain't payin' for this.

JBB: That's a tall, tall order, Honky. Sounds like your schedule's pretty full. But before you go off dreaming, you actually have to win something first. You think that some-

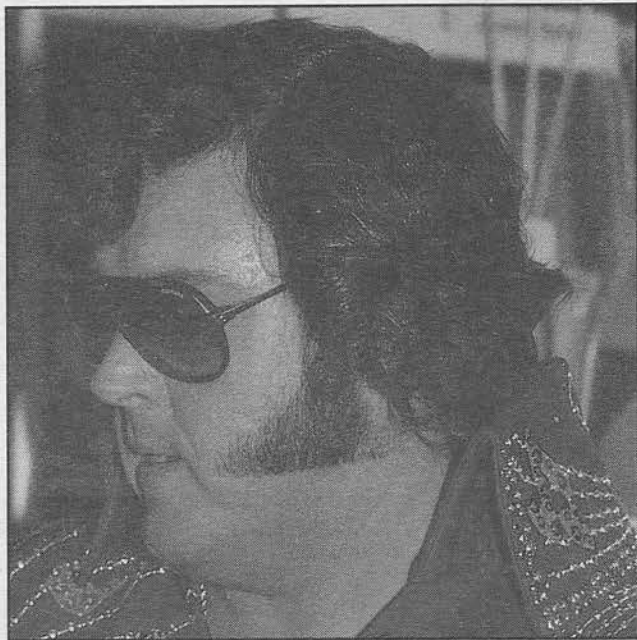
ONE ON ONE



"I'll face you anytime you want, Honky Tonk Man. I'll even wrestle you in your hometown, although even there I'll bet the people are ashamed of you."

—Johnny B. Badd

N ONE



"After I win the TV belt from you, I'll give you a front-row seat to one of my concerts. You'll have the thrill of your life. You'll be the envy of your friends"

—The Honky Tonk Man

thing is my TV belt, but that isn't gonna happen. You know, you're not a bad wrestler, Honky. I mean that. I'm just better, that's all. I can wrestle, and I can box, too. I was a Golden Gloves champion, but you probably already knew that. So stop dreaming and start facing the facts. Forget about my TV belt.

HTM: Usually I would forget about it. I don't think you're worth the effort. You should just hand me that belt and admit you ain't as good as me. I'm after bigger game here, Badd. You seem to have it in your head that you're the finest entertainer in WCW. You think you put on a show like nobody else. That's where I'll prove you wrong. See, Badd, you might look like Little Richard, but that's where it ends. I don't care

much for the guy, but he's a rock 'n' roll legend. You aren't one-tenth the showman he is. You come sashaying into the ring and shooting confetti into the air with that piece of junk contraption of yours, but any fool can do that. Now The Honky Tonk Man is a true talent. I can wrestle, I can sing, and I can play the guitar. And I do it a heck of a lot better than that certain someone people accuse me of trying to imitate.

JBB: Please, Honky, stop it, or I swear I'll bust a gut laughing so hard! My man, I never claimed to be any kind of musician. Little Richard's one of my idols and I would never even attempt to compare. But you really are deluded. You have the nerve to say you're better than the "King" himself—and I don't mean that guy who

wrestles at Mid-South Coliseum! I've heard you play the guitar. You don't even know all the chords. And your singing? My goodness, it's awful! I do agree with one thing you said, though. You are a true talent. You have a tremendous talent for self-promotion. Who else is on your side?

HTM: What I hear coming over the telephone line is the sound of pure jealousy. That's all it is. You don't have what The Honky Tonk Man's got and it's eatin' you alive. That's why I'll have so much fun taking your crummy little belt. What a pleasure it'll be stepping all over you! Trouble is, you're afraid of me. Go ahead, admit it. What kind of a champion are you? The Honky Tonk Man defended his title against all comers, which is more than I can say for you.

JBB: That's certainly not what I heard. You held that belt so long 'cause you avoided the best, and when you did wrestle them you cheated and cheated and cheated. I'll face you anytime you want, Honky Tonk Man. I'll even wrestle you in your hometown, although even there I'll bet the people are ashamed of you. I will make my title the most respected in WCW. But first I might have to tarnish it a little in order to get rid of you.

HTM: Tarnish this, Badd! The Honky Tonk Man brings class to everything he does. I'm the one who'll have to be wiping the dirt off his hands, not you. That's all right, 'cause being the best is hard work. Tell you what. I'll be a good sport about this. After I win the TV belt from you, I'll give you a front-row seat to one of my concerts. Up close and personal with The Honky Tonk Man. You'll have the thrill of your life. You'll be the envy of your friends. What about it, Badd?

JBB: Hmm, I might consider that. Of course I don't intend to lose, but I do have to keep an open mind about this. I have just one favor, though. I'll need something very important from you.

HTM: Heck, I'll oblige. What is it?

JBB: A set of earplugs.

HTM: You're a funny man, Badd, a regular comedian! □

Sincerely Yours

(Continued from page 5)

There are many great women wrestlers such as Miss Texas, Terri Power, Bambi, Misty Blue Simmes, and others who could give Blayze a run for her money. If the WWF signed some of them, it could make women's wrestling popular again.

The fans will eventually get tired, if they haven't already, of seeing Blayze beat Vachon, Nakano, and second-rate opponents such as Heidi Lee Morgan and Lelani Kai. If the WWF doesn't take action soon, it will be wasting a great opportunity.

MORGAN GIBSON
Blountville, TN

LIGHTEN UP!

Despite many desperate appeals, WCW and the WWF still refuse to institute a light heavyweight division. The WWF would have been wise to leave the Women's title dormant and provide a light heavyweight championship. Meanwhile, WCW should



It would be great to see Chris Benoit and Sabu competing in either WCW or the WWF, says reader Stan R. Lenkiewicz. He thinks they would be more likely to do so if either federation instituted a light heavyweight title.

give serious consideration to reinstating its belt.

2 Cold Scorpio, Sabu, Chris Benoit, and The Kid are just a few of the top light heavyweights currently in the sport. Unfortunately, most are not given the opportunity to shine in a major promotion, and must compete in lesser-known independent federations.

STAN R. LENKIEWICZ
Paramus, NJ

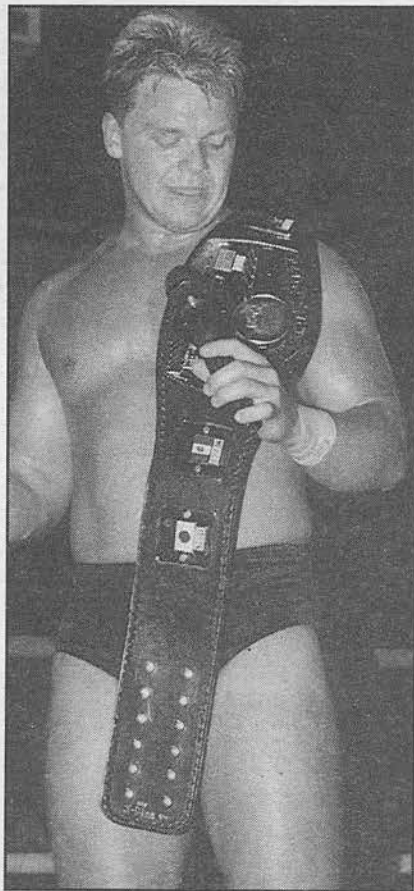
SHAME ON SHANE

That Shane Douglas renounced the NWA belt was reprehensible,

pure and simple! And to think he's known as "The Franchise." If he can't appreciate the heritage of the sport—unlike Ric Flair, a man he despises—why does Douglas compete in the first place? At least Flair has some respect for wrestling history.

I am truly embarrassed by Shane's juvenile outburst, and ECW fans should feel doubly so. Of course, given their bloodthirsty, anarchic mindset, I'm not counting on it.

TRISH DAYTON
Indianola, IA □



Shane Douglas had no right to throw the NWA belt down after he won it in a tournament, contends reader Trish Dayton. She says "The Franchise" should have more respect for the history of wrestling.

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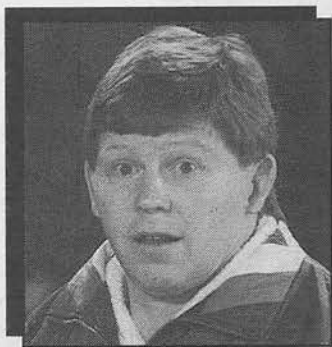
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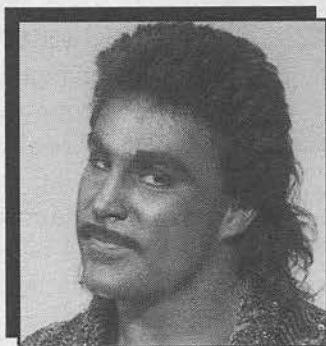
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This Month In...

THE Wrestler



The Wrestler's Top 10 list: Why **BOB BACKLUND** snapped!



Hey—not **BADD!**
JOHNNY B. champ!

PLUS ...

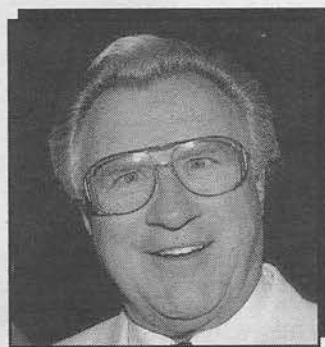
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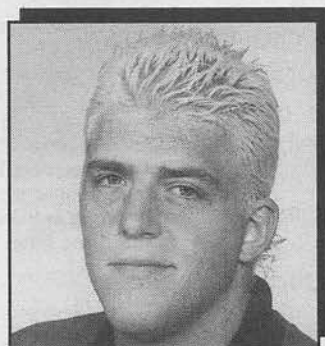
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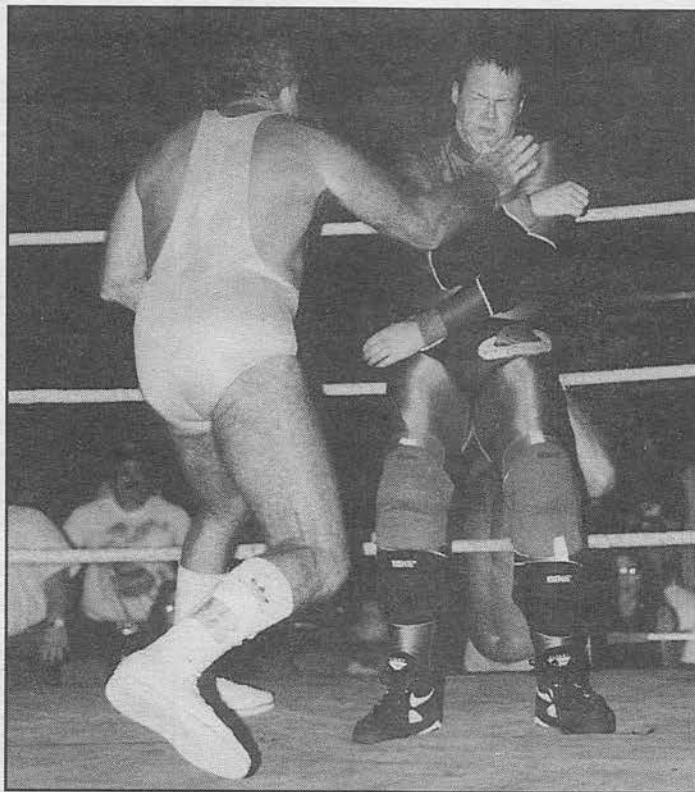
Behind the Door

(Continued from page 12)

managed to keep it away from manager Jim Cornette, who could have been wrestling's Selig. He feuded with Cornette for months while he was SMW commissioner. There was the case of a top federation official who was often called upon to mediate disputes between wrestlers at a time when he was feuding with SMW's top manager.

Disputes in wrestling are more easily handled than disputes in other sports because there are no teams. In effect, WCW is one team and the wrestlers are its players. They are independent contractors who can sign with any federation they wish. Unions are unnecessary in wrestling because the wrestlers already have the right baseball and hockey players are fighting for: the right to work wherever they wish and offer their services to the highest bidder. So, a commissioner doesn't have to worry about strikes or lockouts. Nor must he negotiate contracts. That's usually left to the owner of the federation or to his representatives.

Wrestling commissioners are truly capable of acting in the sport's best interests because they have no conflict of interest. Their job is to enforce the rules. That's it.



Bob Armstrong had to wrestle his way into the Smoky Mountain commissioner's position, beating Jim Cornette and his hired thugs. Armstrong was once both a wrestler and the commissioner of SMW at the same time. He certainly had a hard time remaining impartial.

The problem with Bockwinkel, however, is that he has crossed the line and taken an interest in WCW's business practices. That's what the wrestlers are concerned about.

Usually, a commissioner deals with three questions:

1. Has a rule been broken?
2. Is the accused guilty of breaking the rule?
3. What is the proper punishment for this?

Bockwinkel appears to have five questions to deal with:

1. Has a rule been broken?
2. Is the accused guilty of breaking the rule?
3. What is the accused's relationship with Hulk Hogan?

4. How will a fine or suspension affect WCW business?

5. What kind of punishment can I get away with handing down?

That's what's alarming. If Bockwinkel is worried about WCW business, he's no longer an independent arbitrator. He's like Bettman, who can't possibly call himself an impartial arbitrator when he has the power to fine or suspend players and make the final decision about whether they will be locked out of the regular season.

Same with Selig, who really has one interest: the owners' bank accounts. How can he be a fair judge?

It's like the owner of a multimillion-dollar company also being the judge in a sexual harassment suit against an employee of the company.

Perhaps I'm being a little paranoid. I've never been a fan of management and believe most bosses cannot be trusted. That's why unions must exist (although sometimes they can't be trusted, either). But a lot of people in wrestling feel the same way as I do about Bockwinkel. Besides, even the appearance of impropriety is enough to justify a commissioner's dismissal. He must be squeaky-clean.

Ban Bockwinkel? Fire him? Undoubtedly. It must be done immediately. □

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7771	Bruce Springsteen	3442	Fight	6322	Meat Loaf	7332	Red Hot Chili Peppers	8451	Ugly Kid Joe
2321	Bryan Adams	3471	Firehouse	6241	Megadeth	6273	Richard Marx	8743	Urge Overkill
2852	Bulletboys	3531	Fleetwood Mac	3841	Melissa Etheridge	7521	Robert Plant	8262	Van Halen
2881	Butthole Surfers	3673	Foreigner	6382	Metallica	7832	Rod Stewart	6341	Vince Neil
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2461	Cinderella	4461	Gin Blossoms	6443	Mighty M. Bosstones	7871	Rush	9272	Warrant
2656	Collective Soul	4721	Grateful Dead	6463	Ministry	7223	Sacred Reich	9441	White Zombie
2663	Concrete Blonde	4731	Great White	6252	Mitch Malloy	7261	Santana	9463	The Who
2671	Elvis Costello	4737	Green Day	6672	Morrissey	7374	Sepultura	9454	Wilson Phillips
2683	Counting Crows	4735	Green Jelly	6682	Motley Crue	6262	Sinead O'Connor	9671	World Party
2682	Coverdale/Page	4861	Guns N' Roses	6681	Motorhead	7541	Skid Row	9371	Yes
2693	Cowboy Junkies	4274	Hardline	6721	Mr. Big	7523	Slaughter	6251	Yngwie Malmsteen
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The Insider

(Continued from page 14)

have to take matters into my own hands, again, as usual."

For the first time in his career, matters have been taken from Ric Flair's hands. He was the primary suspect in a poorly engineered and absurdly conceived attack on Hulk Hogan, an attack that left no visible scars to the champ but resulted in Flair and Sherri Martel being suspended by WCW Commissioner Nick Bockwinkel. Though Flair denies any involvement in the attack, it wasn't the suspension that worries him.

"I had been suspended before, it's no big deal," he says. "But this was very different. I was being singled out, ostracized. I'm not paranoid. I am not a conspiracy

nut. But it's pretty clear what's happening here."

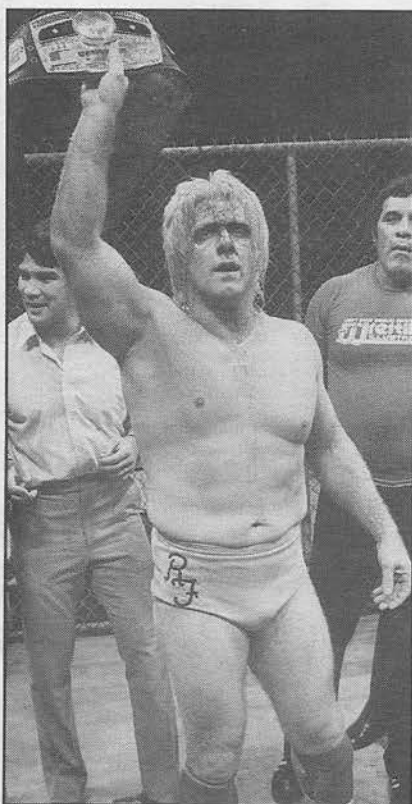
What's happening, according to Flair, is that he's being pushed into semi-retirement so the federation can promote the Hogan-Big Van Vader wars. I point out he was permitted several title shots against Hogan during the recent WCW European tour and came up empty-handed. "I don't like wrestling overseas," he said seriously. "I never have and the federation knows that."

The fire in Flair's eyes had not aged, though I know the same wasn't true of his body. He has mentioned the suspension gave him time to heal various aches and pains. I wondered if it was all too much bother. His life could be so comfortable. He's a rich man, and has offers from companies around the world to represent them. Would he mind if he lost to Hogan and had to get used to the idea of retirement?

"There's the problem," Flair said. "No one questions Hogan's motives. The guy takes a year off then steps right into a championship match. No one thinks to criticize the double-standard there."

"They've been trying to retire me for five years. Everyone, fans, writers, everyone ... I'm not going anywhere. In my soul, I am a wrestler. That's what I do best, and until I can't compete, I will wrestle. If Hulk Hogan beats me, I'll walk away with no regrets. I've given everything I have to the sport. No one can ever take that away from me."

Except, perhaps, a biased referee or a crooked commissioner. ☐



In 1983, Flair raised a world title belt for the second of 10 times, after his victory over Harley Race in Greensboro. I can't imagine this scene never being repeated.

On The Road

(Continued from page 10)



When Backlund made an earlier comeback with the WWF in 1991, he still had enough decency to greet children attending federation cards. These days, he'd snarl and ask them to name every President of the United States.

his matches. Some thought he was being affectatious; others believed him to be naive. But the gesture was always genuine. Backlund believed in the pure spirit of competition, meaning you arrive with confidence in your ability but with respect for your opponent. You don't posture, or taunt, or take off your helmet, all things that have been going on at the University of Miami for the last 10 years.

Some of the Hurricanes said after last year's 29-0 humiliation by Arizona in the Fiesta Bowl that they couldn't get up for the game because it didn't have any national championship implications. Strangely enough, Arizona seemed to get up for the game just fine.

Backlund had never been a sore loser. Of course, when you are the best wrestler in the world for more than five years, there are not many losses to get sore about. But on the rare occasions when Backlund did go down to defeat, he did so with dignity and grace.

He never made excuses about

losing, even when the opponent had resorted to some type of rule-breaking activity in order to beat him. He just became motivated to come back that much stronger the next time. He also never backed down from a challenge, even one as meaningless as the hour he spent conquering the Harvard Step Test on a WWF telecast.

Backlund also handled success with unassuming modesty. It would have been easy for him to blow his own horn while in the midst of his run as WWF World champion, but he chose not to. It would have given him a small sense of satisfaction to seek out the skeptics and say, "I told you so!"

Contrast that with the behavior of Deion Sanders, who two years ago was more focused on throwing water on announcer Tim McCarver instead of the upcoming World Series.

Backlund's actions against Gianfriddo—and his inevitable character change to rulebreaker—have undone his image as a hero. He now must be lumped in with

Rodman, Holtz, Webber, Rose, Tyson, and every other sports figure that subscribes to the theory that it is better to look good than to feel good about yourself. If there's one concept that today's athlete truly doesn't understand, it is that no matter how big the contract, you still can't buy lasting heroism.

Had Backlund never regained the greatness he attained earlier in his career, he still would have left wrestling as one of its heroes. But that is no longer within his reach. Some fans will say that he didn't remain true to them, but where Backlund failed was in not remaining true to himself. □

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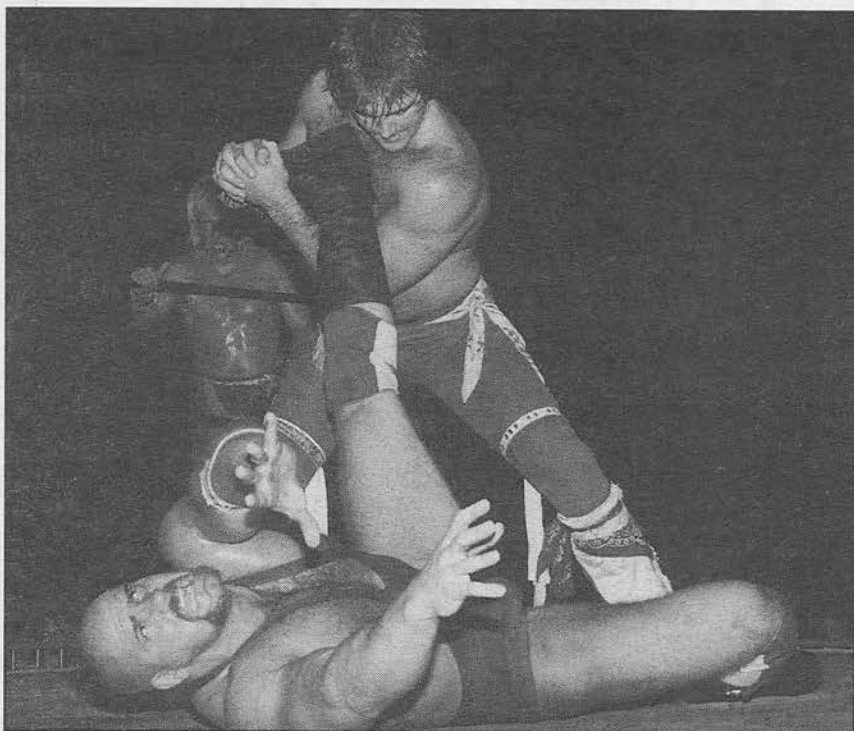
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On Assignment

(Continued from page 16)



The Rock 'n' Rolls had classic series during the '80s with several teams, including Nikita and Ivan Koloff. Though Gibson and Morton enjoy reminiscing, they have vibrant careers with bright prospects.

Morton: That's considered a first-run film. It brings back a lot of great memories.

Hunter: That movie ... I remember too many backseats, too many hands.

Gibson: A magazine once said watching The Rock 'n' Roll Express wrestle was like watching a pair of John Travoltas dance.

Morton: This was when he was huge, understand. After *Saturday Night Fever* and *Grease*.

Gibson: In other words, it was a major compliment. It was always a private joke between us.

Morton: We've kind of compared our careers to Travolta's. The ups and downs. They've matched perfectly. When he was big, we were NWA champions. Then we he started making dog movies, we started feuding.

(I want to point out that Morton's chronology is not pre-

cise, though I didn't say anything to him while he was on this delicious roll of free association. In fact, Travolta's fortunes do mirror theirs in ebb and flow, and that's what counts.)

Gibson: When we got back together, we found it was better to stay in federations like Smokey Mountain, where the competition at the top level is excellent, but you don't have to spend six months working your way back up the ladder every time you have a setback.

Morton: Like Travolta making the *Look Who's Talking* movies. Not big blockbusters, but big enough to keep our names circulating. It's time to go for the heart, and see which way the blood is flowing.

Hunter: Y'know about Travolta's new movie don't you?

(I tell the boys about Travolta's starring role in *Pulp Fiction*, the

new film from Hollywood's latest wunderkind, Quentin Tarantino. The movie, and especially Travolta's performance as Vincent Vega—no relation to the wrestler—has generated unanimous praise, making my next question obvious.)

Hunter: Do you think The Rock 'n' Roll Express is ready to step back into the big arenas?

Morton: If Johnny can, I don't see why we can't.

Hunter: I'm serious. I read an interview where Travolta had resigned himself to the fact his career was going nowhere. He was spending time with his family. Do you think you've settled into the medium-federation life? Or can the Express headline the big time again?

Morton: This sounds like an interview, Liz.

Hunter: Sorry. I'm just curious.

Gibson: We talk about it. We even took a little sidetrip to the WWF a little while back. This is a damned good federation we're in here. We like it. But it's not pay-per-view. It's not big cities and bright lights. I don't think we're scared to try. We just have convince some promoters that we're as good as we've ever been.

Morton: It's not like John Travolta lost his ability. It's that other people lost faith in his ability. We're as good as any team in the world. We know that. If you arranged a match for us against Michaels and Diesel, we'd wrestle for free, just to show everyone what we still have. But until that happens, we're satisfied doing what we're doing. We're wrestlers. We wrestle.

Gibson: Just like the song, Liz. We're staying alive, that's what we're doing. Do-do-do-do staying alive. □

Inside Wrestling

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February 1986/Stories include: R'n'R Express, Warriors, Mulligan & Windham.
June 1986/Stories include: Bulldogs, Windham-Flair, Lance Von, Blanchard.
July 1986/All-American Special Issue. Stories include: Hogan, Slaughter, T.A.
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April 1988/Stories include: Luger-Flair, Ultimate Warrior, Andre-Hogan-DiBiase.
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August 1988/Stories include: Savage, Missy Hyatt, Sting, Hayes, Honky Tonk.
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December 1991/Stories include: SummerSlam, York, Simmons.
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November 1992/Stories include: Flair, Warrior, Vader, top rope rule.
December 1992/Stories include: Flair, Ramon, Heavenly Bodies, Jarrett.
March 1993/Stories include: Michaels, Nikita Koloff, Windham-Rhodes.
April 1993/Stories include: WWF new blood, Sting-Vader, Flair, Paul E.
May 1993/Stories include: WrestleMania IX analysis, Andre tribute, Muta.
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August 1993/Stories include: Christopher-Michaels, Hogan-Yokozuna, Hart.
September 1993/Stories include: Steiners, Slamboree, Ramon, Sting & Smith, Hart.
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February 1994/Stories include: Hogan, Duggan, Doinks, Blonds, holiday wishes.
March 1994/Stories include: Nastys, Parker, Borga, 1994 predictions.
May 1994/Stories include: Flair-Rude, Hart, Luger, Morton, Heenan-Bockwinkel.
June 1994/Stories include: Steamboat, Snuka, Anthony, Bruise Bros., Blayze.
August 1994/Stories include: Piper, Hogan, 911, Freebirds, rulebreakers.
September 1994/Stories include: Nastys, Undertaker, Volkoff, Flair-Steamboat.
November 1994/Stories include: DiBiase, Sting, Koloff, Diesel, Cactus-Sabu.
December 1994/Stories include: Hogan, Bret, Rottens, Cactus, AAA midgits.
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OFFICIAL RATINGS

TOP 15

- 1—**HULK HOGAN**
(1) WCW World champion
- 2—**BRET HART**
(2) WWF World champion
- 3—**RAZOR RAMON**
(3) WWF Intercontinental champion

- 4—**THE UNDERTAKER**
(6) No. 4 contender: WWF World title
- 5—**RIC FLAIR**
(11) No. 5 contender: WCW World title
- 6—**STING**
(5) No. 4 contender: WCW World title
- 7—**BIG VAN VADER**
(4) No. 3 contender: WCW World title

- 8—**HACKSAW DUGGAN**
(9) U.S. heavyweight champion
- 9—**LEX LUGER**
(-) No. 7 contender: WWF World title
- 10—**TONY ANTHONY**
(13) Smoky Mountain champion
- 11—**JOHNNY B. BADD**
(8) WCW TV champion

- 12—**SID VICIOUS**
(7) USWA heavyweight champion
- 13—**OWEN HART**
(-) No. 6 contender: WWF World title
- 14—**SABU**
(10) No. 1 contender: WCW heavyweight title
- 15—**BOB BACKLUND**
(-) No. 3 contender: WWF World title

WCW

- 1—**HULK HOGAN**
(1) 275, Venice Beach, CA
- 2—**HACKSAW DUGGAN**
(2) 280, Glens Falls, NY
- 3—**JOHNNY B. BADD**
(3) 235, Macon, GA

- 4—**BIG VAN VADER**
(4) 450, Denver, CO
- 5—**STING**
(5) 260, Venice Beach, CA
- 6—**RIC FLAIR**
(6) 243, Minneapolis, MN
- 7—**THE GUARDIAN ANGEL**
(10) 310, Cobb County, GA

- 8—**STEVE AUSTIN**
(9) 241, Dallas, TX
- 9—**THE HONKY TONK MAN**
(14) 278, Memphis, TN
- 10—**DUSTIN RHODES**
(11) 254, Austin, TX
- 11—**BRIAN PILLMAN**
(13) 226, Cincinnati, OH

- 12—**DAVE SULLIVAN**
(-) 283, Boston, MA
- 13—**STEVE REGAL**
(7) 247, Blackpool, England
- 14—**ARN ANDERSON**
(-) 249, Minneapolis, MN
- 15—**KEVIN SULLIVAN**
(8) 252, Boston, MA

WWF

- 1—**BRET HART**
(1) 234, Calgary, Alberta
- 2—**RAZOR RAMON**
(2) 287, Miami, FL
- 3—**JIM NEIDHART**
(6) 275, Tampa, FL

- 4—**BOB BACKLUND**
(14) 234, Princeton, MN
- 5—**THE UNDERTAKER**
(3) 328, parts unknown
- 6—**YOKOZUNA**
(-) 568, Samoa
- 7—**OWEN HART**
(8) 227, Calgary, Alberta

- 8—**LEX LUGER**
(7) 265, Chicago, IL
- 9—**TATANKA**
(10) 250, Pembroke, NC
- 10—**ADAM BOMB**
(-) 292, Harrisburg, PA
- 11—**IRWIN R. SCHYSTER**
(5) 248, Syracuse, NY

- 12—**KING KONG BUNDY**
(-) 446, Atlantic City, NJ
- 13—**MABEL**
(11) 503, Harlem, NY
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(-) 212, Minneapolis, MN

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- 2—**BRET HART**
Last issue: No. 3 Most Popular
- 3—**STING**
Last issue: No. 1 Most Popular

- 4—**THE UNDERTAKER**
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- 11—**CACTUS JACK**
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- 8—**OWEN HART**
Last issue: No. 9 Most Hated
- 9—**DIESEL**
Last issue: No. 7 Most Hated
- 10—**SHANE DOUGLAS**
Last issue: No. 14 Most Hated
- 11—**YOKOZUNA**
Last issue: No. 12 Most Hated

- 12—**THE HONKY TONK MAN**
Last issue: unrated
- 13—**IRWIN R. SCHYSTER**
Last issue: No. 5 Most Popular
- 14—**ARN ANDERSON**
Last issue: No. 4 Most Hated
- 15—**STEVE AUSTIN**
Last issue: No. 6 Most Hated

TOP 15

- 1—**MARCUS BAGWELL & THE PATRIOT**
(3) WCW World tag team champions
- 2—**THE NASTY BOYS**
(6) No. 1 contenders: WCW World tag title
- 3—**PAUL ORNDORFF & PAUL ROMA**
(1) No. 2 contenders: WCW World tag title
- 4—**DIESEL & SHAWN MICHAELS**
(2) WWF World tag team champions
- 5—**THE HEADSHRINKERS**
(7) No. 1 contenders: WWF World tag title

- 6—**THE GANGSTAS**
(9) Smoky Mountain tag team champions
- 7—**THE ROCK 'N' ROLL EXPRESS**
(4) No. 1 contenders: Smoky Mountain tag title
- 8—**PG-13**
(8) USWA tag team champions
- 9—**THE BUSHWHACKERS**
(15) No. 2 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 10—**PUBLIC ENEMY**
(12) No. 1 contenders: ECW tag title

- 11—**CACTUS JACK & MIKEY WHIPWRECK**
(11) ECW tag team champions
- 12—**THE SMOKIN' GUNNS**
(-) No. 3 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 13—**THE HEAVENLY BODIES**
(-) No. 2 contenders: Smoky Mountain tag title
- 14—**BUNKHOUSE BUCK & TERRY FUNK**
(13) No. 3 contenders: WCW World tag title
- 15—**THE PHANTOMS**
(-) USWA tag team champions

These ratings are compiled by the editors with the assistance of promoters, wrestlers, and reporters around the country, and are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and the inherent skill of each wrestler. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue... "Most Popular" and "Most Hated" ratings are based on nationwide surveys of wrestling fans and on mail that comes to our offices ... Championships highlighted in bold on the "Roll Call Of Champions" have changed hands since our previous issue ... The information under the championship listing indicates the date that champion won the title, who the former champion was, and where the match took place.

For period ended October 19, 1994

ROLL CALL OF CHAMPIONS

AAA TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: LOVE MACHINE & EDDY GUERRERO
(July 23, 1994; beat El Hijo del Santo & Octagon; Rosemont, Illinois)

ALL-JAPAN ASIAN TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: DAN KROFFAT & DOUG FURNAS
(September 9, 1993; from The Patriot & The Eagle; Omiya, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN INTERNATIONAL CHAMPION: STEVE WILLIAMS
(July 28, 1994; from Mitsuharu Misawa; Tokyo, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: DAN KROFFAT
(July 12, 1994; from Masanobu Fuchi; Kagoshima, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: MITSU HARU MISAWA & KENTA KOBASHI
(December 3, 1993; beat Akira Taue & Toshiaki Kawada in tournament final; Tokyo, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN UNITED NATIONAL CHAMPION: STEVE WILLIAMS
(July 28, 1994; from Mitsuharu Misawa; Tokyo, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN WOMEN'S ALL-PACIFIC CHAMPION: MINAMI TOYOTA
(August 24, 1994; beat Yoko Inoue; Tokyo, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN WOMEN'S CHAMPION: KAORU ITO
(May 4, 1994; beat Rie Tamada in tournament final; Toda, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL CHAMPION: AJA KONG
(November 26, 1992; from Bull Nakano; Kawasaki, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN WOMEN'S JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: CANDY OKUTSU
(December 6, 1993; from Chapparita Asari; Osaka, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN WOMEN'S TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:
MINAMI TOYOTA & TOSHIYO YAMADA
(December 6, 1993; from Dynamite Kansai & Mayumi Ozaki; Osaka, Japan)

ALL-STATE WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: TONY PRICHARD
(August 24, 1994; from Rick Cannon; Pigeon Forge, TN)

ALL-STATE WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: REGULATOR STEEL & REGULATOR STONE
(September 15, 1994; by forfeit, from Rick Connors & Lone Star; Maryville, TN)

AMERICAN COMMONWEALTH HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: T. RANTULA
(March 26, 1994; from Rip Sawyer; Johnsonburg, PA)

AMERICAN COMMONWEALTH LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: LORD ZOLTAN
(October 1, 1994; from Johnny Graham; Lewistown, PA)

AMERICAN COMMONWEALTH TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: THE BAD CREW
(September 30, 1993; title previously vacant; York, PA)

AMERICAN STATES WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: SCOTT SOMERS
(November 19, 1993; from Bo Dacious; Mansfield, OH)

ATLANTIC WRESTLING COUNCIL LIGHTWEIGHT CHAMPION: BOBBY ROGERS
(December 4, 1993; from Blare Rogers; Hollywood, FL)

ATLANTIC WRESTLING COUNCIL TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: T.J. JACKSON & THE MISER
(July 2, 1993; from American Scorpion & The Falcon; West Palm Beach, FL)

CENTURY WRESTLING ALLIANCE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: TONY ATLAS
(December 4, 1993; from Vic Steamboat; Tewksbury, MA)

CONTINENTAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: VIC STEAMBOAT
(October 23, 1993; from The Iron Sheik; Wakefield, MA)

CONTINENTAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: RAY ODYSSEY
(October 23, 1993; from Flex Lavender; Wakefield, MA)

ECW HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: SHANE DOUGLAS
(March 26, 1994; from Terry Funk; Devon, PA)

ECW TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: CACTUS JACK & MIKEY WHIPWRECK
(August 27, 1994; from Public Enemy; Philadelphia, PA)

ECW TELEVISION CHAMPION: JASON
(August 13, 1994; from Mikey Whipwreck; Philadelphia, PA)

IPWA CHAMPION: TITLE HELD UP
(Most recently held by Vern Henderson)

IWC HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: KONNAN
(April 2, 1994; from Cien Caras; Reynosa, Mexico)

IWCCW LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: JOE SAVOLDI
(December 26, 1991; from Tasmaniac; Monticello, NY)

IWCCW TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: THE SIOUX WAR PARTY
(May 9, 1992; beat The Canadians in tournament final; Hamburg, PA)

IWGP CHAMPION: SHINYA HASHIMOTO
(May 1, 1994; from Tatum Fujinami; Fukuoka, Japan)

IWGP INTERNATIONAL TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: KENSUKE SASAKI & HAWK
(January 4, 1994; from Scott Norton & Hercules; Tokyo, Japan)

IWGP JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: NORIO HONAGA
(September 27, 1994; beat Pegasus Kid in tournament final; Osaka, Japan)

MIDWEST TERRITORIAL WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: MACHINE GUN KELLY
(July 16, 1994; from Al Snow; Taylor, MI)

MIDWEST TERRITORIAL WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:
THE INTERNATIONAL FREEDOM FIGHTERS
(July 16, 1994; from Road Warrior Hawk & Bobo Brazil Jr.; Taylor, MI)

NWA WOMEN'S CHAMPION: BAMBI
(July 26, 1994; from Peggy Lee Leather; Chattanooga, TN)

PACIFIC WRESTLING FEDERATION CHAMPION: STEVE WILLIAMS
(July 28, 1994; from Mitsuharu Misawa; Tokyo, Japan)

PACIFIC WRESTLING FEDERATION INTERNATIONAL TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:
MITSU HARU MISAWA & KENTA KOBASHI
(December 3, 1993; beat Akira Taue & Toshiaki Kawada in tournament final; Tokyo, Japan)

PLANT CITY WRESTLING FEDERATION HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: LUSCIOUS LUKE
(May 19, 1994; from Vern Henderson; Plant City, Florida)

PRO WRESTLING FEDERATION HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: ITALIAN STALLION
(October 1, 1994; beat Russian Assassin II; North Wilkesboro, NC)

PRO WRESTLING FEDERATION INTERCONTINENTAL CHAMPION: TERRY AUSTIN
(October 1, 1994; from Cruel Connection II; North Wilkesboro, NC)

PRO WRESTLING FEDERATION JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: FLAMING YOUTH
(August 19, 1994; from Brian Williams; Elkin, NC)

PRO WRESTLING FEDERATION TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: STAR RYDER & RAVISHING RANDY
(October 1, 1994; from Black Scorpion & Masked Maniac; North Wilkesboro, NC)

SMOKY MOUNTAIN HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: TONY ANTHONY
(July 5, 1994; from Jake Roberts; Warrensville, NC)

SMOKY MOUNTAIN TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: THE GANGSTAS
(October 1, 1994; by officials' decision)

SMOKY MOUNTAIN U.S. JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: CHRIS CANDIDO
(November 13, 1993; from Bobby Blaze; Morristown, TN)

TRI-STAR WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: JIMMY SHARPE
(July 22, 1994; from Randy Steele; Rossville, GA)

TRI-STAR WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: ROGER SARTAIN & JOEL TRAVIS
(September 29, 1994; from Cam & Sam Colt; Rossville, GA)

USWA HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: SID VICIOUS
(July 16, 1994; by forfeit, from Jerry Lawler; Memphis, TN)

USWA SOUTHERN CHAMPION: TOMMY RICH
(October 3, 1994; beat Buddy Landell in tournament final; Memphis, TN)

USWA TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: PG-13
(August 29, 1994; from Dante & The Great Mephisto; Memphis, TN)

WCW TELEVISION CHAMPION: JOHNNY B. BADD
(September 18, 1994; from Lord Steven Regal; Roanoke, VA)

WCW U.S. CHAMPION: HACKSAW DUGGAN
(September 18, 1994; from Steve Austin; Roanoke, VA)

WCW WORLD CHAMPION: HULK HOGAN
(July 17, 1994; from Ric Flair; Orlando, FL)

WCW WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: MARCUS BAGWELL & THE PATRIOT
(September 25, 1994; from Paul Orndorff & Paul Roma; Atlanta, GA)

WINDY CITY WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: THE SMITH BROTHERS
(November 13, 1993; from The Twin Turbos; Greenville, IL)

WORLD WIDE WRESTLING ALLIANCE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: BRUTUS BEEFCAKE
(April 16, 1994; from Nailz; Atlantic City, NJ)

WORLD WIDE WRESTLING ALLIANCE INTERCONTINENTAL CHAMPION: JACK HAMMER
(August 27, 1993; from Tony Atlas; Freeport, Bahamas)

WORLD WIDE WRESTLING ALLIANCE TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: TITLE VACANT
(Most recently held by The Diamond Express)

WORLD WRESTLING ALLIANCE TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: DUANE & WAYNE GILL
(May 14, 1994; from The Super Jocks; Williamstown, NJ)

WWA FRONTIER MARTIAL ARTS CHAMPION: MR. ONITA
(September 19, 1992; from Tiger Jeet Singh; Yokohama, Japan)

WWF INTERCONTINENTAL CHAMPION: RAZOR RAMON
(August 29, 1994; from Diesel; Chicago, IL)

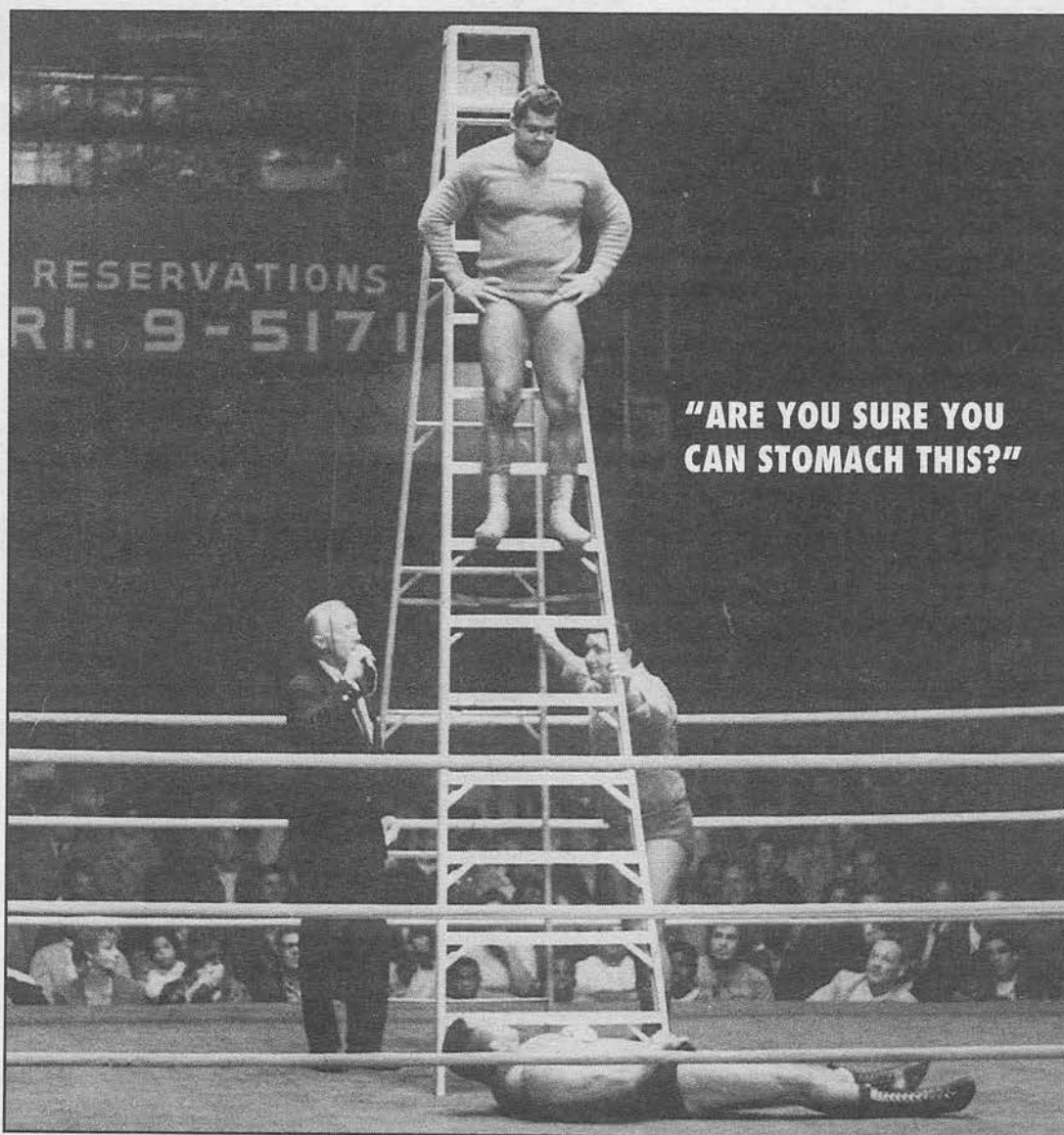
WWF WORLD WOMEN'S CHAMPION: ALUNDRA BLAYZE
(December 13, 1993; beat Heidi Lee Morgan in tournament final; Poughkeepsie, NY)

WWF WORLD CHAMPION: BRET HART
(March 20, 1994; from Yokozuna; New York, NY)

WWF WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: DIESEL & SHAWN MICHAELS
(August 28, 1994; from The Headshrinkers; Indianapolis, IN)

BLAST FROM THE PAST

This Month In Wrestling History

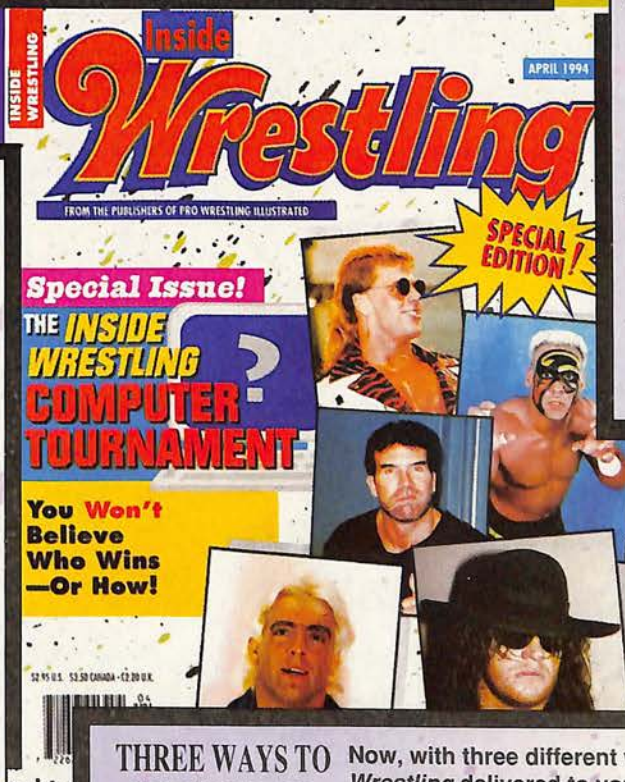


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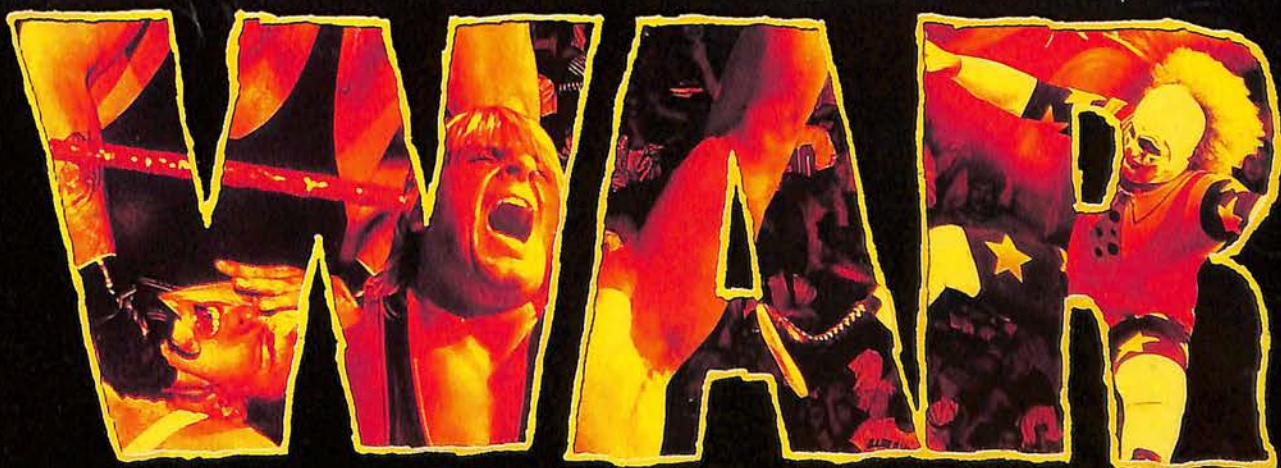
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